

# MEMORY AND OBLIVION IN BYZANTIUM



# ПАМЕТ И ЗАБРАВА ВЪВ ВИЗАНТИЯ







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# MEMORY AND OBLIVION IN BYZANTIUM

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# ПАМЕТ И ЗАБРАВА ВЪВ ВИЗАНТИЯ

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**Memory and Oblivion in Byzantium**  
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„When Solon asked the priests (of Egypt) who were most skilful in such matters, about antiquity, and made the discovery that neither he nor any other Hellene knew anything worth mentioning about the times of old. On one occasion, wishing to draw them on to speak of antiquity, he began to tell about the most ancient things in our part of the world – about... the Deluge and the survival of Deucalion and Pyrrha; and he traced the genealogy of their descendants, and reckoning up the dates, tried to compute how many years ago the events of which he was speaking happened. Thereupon one of the priests, who was of a very great age, said: O Solon, Solon, you Hellenes are never anything but children, and there is not an old man among you. Solon in return asked him what he meant. I mean to say, he replied, that in mind you are all young; there is no old opinion handed down among you by ancient tradition, nor any science which is hoary with age...”

This famous paragraph from Plato's „*Timaeus*“ is the ideal motto for the current collection for several reasons. First, it is the perfect motto for any research dedicated to the topic of memory and oblivion. Second, when studying Byzantine civilization a scholar finds himself very often on both sides of the stage: on one hand with the astonished Egyptian priest, wondering how it was possible that the Byzantines knew and remembered so many things that we have forgotten today; and on the other he is with the mused Solon wondering why Byzantium has forsaken so many facts (or maybe why the Byzantines have purposely not spoken about them?). Third, but not last, every Byzantinist inevitably sooner or later asks the same question: whether the object of his study, Byzantium, is some type of a modern Atlantis. In other words: isn't what we consider today to be traditionally established sources and methodologies for penetrating the Byzantine past in fact only a mixture of metaphoric figures, allegoric pictures, symbolic messages, didactic examples, and free, often misleading translations? This amalgam of facts-figures-memories has been formed over the course of one and a half millennium, but what part of this colossal fund of memories is being used by the scientists of 21<sup>st</sup> century and in general – to what degree is the reminiscence of Byzantium being discerned to them? In this context the articles in the collection „*Memory and Oblivion in Byzantium*“ represent a limited, but first of its kind attempt to search for the authentic Byzantine understanding on the following question: „What is the past and how much of it has been remembered or forgotten and why has this information either been remembered or forgotten?” This attempt has been made throughout human history but mostly through the prism of the stereologically oriented and eschatologically constructed Devine history where everything has a strictly defined beginning and relatively well defined end.







**Lest We Forget: History writing in Byzantium  
of the Komnenoi and the use of memories**

The title of this paper was chosen to be both informative, but maybe even more importantly, provocative. It should point to three notions which will be examined hereafter: *remembrance*, *oblivion* and *history* – in the sense of history writing – all of them of course in the context of 11<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> century Byzantium, Byzantium of the Komnenoi. The title also has the purpose to stress the main argument of this paper: that Byzantine historians<sup>1</sup> have used the *idea of relying on their own memories* as a means to corroborate their personal view on the events and personalities they were describing; that they felt a need to strengthen the otherwise theoretically κατεξοχήν *objective genre of history* with their personal reminiscence in order to demonstrate their objectiveness in the epoch which witnessed the strong and fierce struggle for domination within the imperial family of the Komnenoi. I shall try to demonstrate that the writers of the history in the 12<sup>th</sup> century – especially Nikephoros Bryennios and Anna Komnene, who were deeply involved in the struggle for the throne and prestige in the highest circles – consciously laid particular stress on their own memories as the sources for their respective Histories, thus aspiring for *absolute truthfulness* in their presentation of events. The generally accepted objectiveness of the historical genre allowed them to skillfully incorporate into historical narrative the subjective character of the personal memories – the mantra that *history* is objective by definition has been repeated from the ancient models throughout the Byzantine millennium, and it could be illustrated by the phrase Nikephoros Gregoras had used in the preface of his History in the mid-fourteenth century: *Because, what eyes are to the living [creatures], the truth is to the history (...)*<sup>2</sup>.

To come back to the phrase *Lest we forget*, which, originating from the poem by Rudyard Kipling named „Recession“, written for the Queen Victoria's jubilee, symbolizes the essentially ambiguous quality of human's remembrance and oblivion. The author of the now famous phrase had in mind the need of humankind to remember

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<sup>1</sup> Although to designate the writers of Byzantine history in the 12<sup>th</sup> century simply as historians is an immense understatement, see for Anna Komnene, D. R. Reinsch, „Zur literarischen Leistung der Anna Komnene“, *AEIMQN. Studies Presented to Lennart Rydén on His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. J. O. Rosenquist, Uppsala 1996, 113–125; idem, „Anna Komnene. Eine gebildete Frau in Byzanz“, *Berliner wissenschaftliche Gesellschaft, Jahrbuch 1999*, Berlin 2000, 159–174; idem, „Women's Literature in Byzantium? – The Case of Anna Komnene“, *Anna Komnene and her Times*, ed. Th. Gouma Peterson, New York-London, 2000, 83–106.

<sup>2</sup> *Nicephori Gregorae Byzantina Historia*, ed. L. Schopen, vol. I, Bonn 1829, 6, 8–9. Similarly, George Pachymeres states some decades earlier that *the spirit of the history is truth*, in the preface of his historical work, *Georges Pachymérès*, ed. A. Failler, vol. I, Paris 1984, 1.1, 18, page 23.



its place on Earth, to remember that humans are only God's creatures, and that humility should never be forgotten nor forsaken, no matter how proud one should feel over his or hers earthly achievements. Ever since the First and then the Second World War (and the wars that followed them), the meaning, and the understanding of the phrase has radically changed, assuming the current, predominantly epitaphic connotation: that we should remember our ancestors and predecessors, especially those who fought and fell for us, their offspring.

In a peculiar way, both these aspects of this much, much later phrase, were present in the attitudes towards the *past* and one's immediate family *ancestors* in Byzantium under the Komnenoi, with one crucial addition: the person who dwells on the past, the author who **supposedly** remembers something from the past years and decades, had always a strong and clear aim – to praise his (or her) origin, to stress his (or her) specific position within the highest circle of the Comnenian family, and to enhance his (or her) political position and status. In other words, following the dominant trends of Comnenian society, it was the author himself who benefited from his (or her) own memories, the remembrance as such being used as a means for one's promotion, and the *subjective* view and subjective, even selfish, goals totally suppressed the *objectiveness*, on which all the authors, outwardly, laid strong emphasis.

This implies that the *forms* of *autobiographical* notes, encountered frequently in the literature and especially in the historical writings of this period, were deeply embedded in the political struggle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century – or much more precisely – in the inner familial struggle of the Komnenoi, which extended through all the levels of the political and social life of Comnenian Byzantium. Since all the pretenders to imperial power, and to the highest positions within the imperial bureaucracy belonged to one and the same, almighty Comnenian family, the nuances that divided them, the different family lines to which they were born, and the great achievements of their direct ancestors, were consciously and conspicuously mentioned and used as justification for their claims to a prestigious and prevalent position within the imperial family.

In order to demonstrate the opinions expressed above, I would like to focus on two examples, both famous and tightly interconnected at various personal and „professional“ levels. Of course, not surprisingly, they are Nikephoros Bryennios and Anna Komnene, a pair unique for many reasons in European history.

The one aspect that interests us here the most is, of course, their historical works, their attitudes toward the past in general, and the ways on which they directly, or indirectly, used their personal memories (or „memories“), in order to support their arguments.

One remark is in order regarding the „exclusion“ of some other historical works that dealt with this period, namely the Histories of John Kinnamos and Niketas Choniates. Firstly, neither of them finished their work during the lifetime of the emperor Manuel Komnenos (†1180), nor were they members of the ruling family. Therefore, they belong to a completely different category from Bryennios



and Anna Komnene, *the celebrity couple* of Comnenian Byzantium, who both decided to write Histories, fully aware that their works would necessary become in great measure, their *personal* legacy.

And secondly, both Kinnamos and Choniates, like all the Byzantine authors, had their own personal agenda, and personal interests which were mirrored in their depiction of the main personalities – not only the emperor Manuel, who was the literary hero of Kinnamos and literary villain of Choniates – but also in the characterization of the personalities who directly surrounded them, and especially in the case of Choniates, their closest colleagues. They both devote much space to the intrigues that riddled the imperial bureaucracy, and had for that purpose used their own „memories“. But, unlike the couple Nikephoros – Anna, Kinnamos and Choniates never made a *qualitative* distinction between the first hand knowledge of historical events they had (their own remembrance), and the information they gathered from the other sources. They were historians dealing with past events, and, in the case of Choniates, also waging some old battles from the times of his rise in the hierarchy of the imperial chancery. Their memories were nominally, strictly divided from their profession as historians – the memories of Nikephoros Bryennios, and even more of his wife Anna, formed the essential part of their works, even in the form of remembering and following family tradition in the case of Bryennios. Their remembrance conveyed a strong political message, and explained their main political argument.

With Nikephoros Bryennios, history as a genre returned to Byzantine literary production, after at least half a century during which no historical works were written, at least not such that would deserve the modern, scholarly qualification of *History*<sup>3</sup>. In Bryennios' case, the content of his work is maybe of lesser importance than the circumstances of its origin, his *approach* to writing history – if it could be qualified as such – and the significance that the author himself ascribed to the literary work he was working on.

The idea for writing a history supposedly came from the empress Irene Doukaina – at least that is what Anna Komnene states at the beginning of her famous *Alexiad*<sup>4</sup>. It is a well-known story according to which Irene wanted Bryennios to record the deeds of her late husband, the emperor Alexios, for posterity, which is a common place of almost every history work since Herodotus. What is interesting, however, is the evident need, which the empress Irene may have articulated, to write down past events that were beginning to fade in the memory of the older generations of the Byzantines, their contemporaries. Irene, to be precise, was afraid that Alexios' and hers epoch would fall into *oblivion*, once her influence over the course that official, imperial, historiography would take, was beginning to fade.

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<sup>3</sup> *Nicéphore Bryennios Histoire*, ed. P. Gautier, Paris, 1975.

<sup>4</sup> *Annae Comnenae Alexias*, eds. D. R. Reinsch – A. Kambylis, Berlin-New York, 2001, Prologos, 3, 2 (pp. 7–8).



It goes without saying that a clear political agenda was underlining Irene's potential demand: to strengthen the Alexios' political legacy, to rewrite, if necessary some events from his reign, or some decisions taken by the late emperor, in short, to explain Alexios' specific role and justify his entire policy. Once again, that is what can be deduced from Anna Komnene's words.

The result is, however, a bit puzzling, at least for modern scholars, all offspring in a certain degree of positivistic thinking, marked by the strong logic of linear reasoning. What Bryennios wrote is actually a novel-like narrative that describes the histories of the Komnenoi, and the Bryennioi, and draws a powerful comparison between the achievements of the brightest sons of the two aristocratic *genoi*<sup>5</sup>. His characters are strong and vivid, his language high-brow and nurtured, but not completely artificial, and he aspired to be considered as an objective historian who just recorded the events *as they had happened*. Of course, nothing remotely similar is true, but the ways by which Bryennios defended his alleged objectivity, and in which he used memories, should be of greater interest to us here.

Diether Reinsch demonstrated not long ago how Bryennios managed skillfully to praise his direct ancestors, especially his homonymous grandfather and the latter's brother even more than the supposed hero of his work, the future emperor Alexios<sup>6</sup>. More than that, Bryennios offered his *version* of the truth, making heroes out of the Bryennioi of the past, in an attempt to rewrite some facts from the recent Byzantine history, namely the role of his ancestors in the fatal battle of Manzikert<sup>7</sup>.

His intentions were clear, but regardless of how naïve his efforts in this respect may seem now, they were supported by two strong arguments:

– first, that his stories were based on the *memories* of the Bryennios (and the Komnenos, for that matter) family;

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<sup>5</sup> A. Kazhdan was the first to note the literary, novel-like character of Bryennios' history, regarding his description of marriage negotiations between the Komnenoi and the Doukai (A. Kazhdan, „Der Mensch in der byzantinischen Literaturgeschichte, *JÖB* 28 (1980), 1–21, especially 6–7; A. Kazhdan–G. Constable, *People and Power in Byzantium*, Washington, D. C., 1982, 113). It was accepted by E. Jeffreys, „Nikephoros Bryennios Reconsidered“, *Byzantium in the 11th century*, ed. V. Vlisidou, Athens, 2003, 201–214 although her paper brought nothing new to the research or better understanding of this important literary and historical work, with the study of Johannes Seger's, *Byzantinische Historiker des zehnten und elften Jahrhunderts. I. Nikephoros Bryennios, Eine philologisch-historische Untersuchung*, München, 1888 (not used by Jeffreys) remaining still a seminal work. Bryennios and his work should truly be studied again in detail, and I offer in the following some remarks from the wider study of his work which should be published soon.

<sup>6</sup> D. R. Reinsch, „O Nikephoros Bryennios: enas „Makedonas“ syggrafeas?“, *2o Diethnes Symposio Byzantini Makedonia*, Thessalonica, 2003, 169–177. Bryennios also praised specifically all the personalities from Macedonia in his work.

<sup>7</sup> *Bryennios*, 111–115; see also 225, 5 and the mention of the *mother of the Bryennioi*, in the same way as Anna Dalassene was referred to as the *mother of the Komnenoi* in the *Alexiad*, or intitled herself as the *mother of the emperor* on her official seals, see J.-Cl. Cheynet – J.-F. Vannier, *Études prosopographiques*, Paris, 1986, 98–100.



– and secondly, connected with the former, that he was simply conveying and writing down *the facts*, without rearranging or explaining them in more detail.

To comment briefly on the latter assumption: Bryennios had deliberately chosen the title *Material of history* (or *Historic material*) for his work, because formulated in such a manner it corroborated the truthfulness of the content of the work. The phrase was current in the last decades of the 11th century and the first decades of the 12<sup>th</sup> – exactly at the time when Bryennios was active, both as a patron of literary works and as a writer.

The title itself was a statement that a *new kind of history* is being produced<sup>8</sup>, a kind that respected the naked truth as its basic principle, exactly because the content sprung from the *memories* of the author, his relatives, and people close to him. A more detailed explanation was therefore not needed, because it was purportedly self-evident that the memories, on which the writer was relying the most, could have not produced anything but a truthful description of events.

Strongly connected with the protagonists of his History, Bryennios could have claimed the objectiveness of his work, even if he could not aspire to assert that *he remembered* personally the events he was writing about. Although he used the categories of memory and remembrance as a means to confirm his own objectiveness, *personal memories*, and the idea of their importance played a much greater role in the history written by his wife, the famous *Alexiad*.

Anna Komnene brought *the use of memories* to a completely new level, never before known in Byzantine literature's most objective genre – historiography – and never to be reached in the centuries to come, not even in the political memoirs of the emperor John Kantakouzenos. And although the *Alexiad* was studied so many times, we still do not possess a relatively comprehensive assessment either of the work itself or of the author, her intentions, literary techniques, and attitudes. To a much greater degree than Bryennios's, Anna's account was considered generally objective, with few, „easily“ recognizable exaggerations, or slight twists of truth<sup>9</sup>.

That kind of simplified opinions could hardly be more mistaken when we deal with a masterpiece of Byzantine literature such as the *Alexiad*<sup>10</sup>, an extremely

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<sup>8</sup> One should consult the *logos* of Manuel Straboromanos regarding the meaning and the usage of the noun *Material*, P. Gautier, „Le dossier d' un haut fonctionnaire d' Alexis Ier Comnène, Manuel Straboromanos, *REB* 23 (1965), 168–204, Logos I, 178–193 (see especially 182, 18–19 and compare it with *Bryennios*, 73, 6–11). See also *Alexias*, Prologos, 2, 1–3 (pages 6–7), and A. Kambylis, „Zum ‚Programm‘ der byzantinischen Historikerin Anna Komnene, *Δώρημα. Hans Diller zum 70. Geburtstag*, Athen, 1975, 127–146.

<sup>9</sup> It should be noted that even Anna's attitude toward her father, the main „hero“ of her History has not yet been studied adequately, and that complexity of her opinions and feelings should be examined much more carefully than it was the case until now – see, for example, her insistence on using the term *rebellion* (*apostasias*) for Alexios and Isaac's fight for the throne against the emperor Nikephoros III Botaneiates, which became evident only with the new, critical edition of the *Alexiad*, cf. D. R. Reinsch, „Zum Text der *Alexias* Anna Komnenes“, *JÖB* 40 (1990), 233–268, especially 245–247.

<sup>10</sup> As the late Jakov Ljubarskij justly stressed more than once, see J. Ljubarskij, „Why is the *Alexiad* a Masterpiece of Byzantine Literature?“, *AEIMON. Studies Presented to Lennart Rydén on*



complex and contemplative literary and emotional account of a lifetime of high hopes and missed opportunities.

Anna Komnene's memories, her remembrance, and alleged witnessing of all the main events she describes are not – and therefore should not be treated and understood as simple autobiographical notes. By labeling them in such a manner, we essentially deprive Anna's *retrospective remarks* of their ideological and political background that were consciously hidden within the apparently objective autobiographical discourse. Actually, Anna Komnene created from her *memories* a whole new literary form, which was by its substance a complete novelty, even if Anna had a prominent predecessor in Michael Psellos, whom she read, and loved, like her husband did too. But unlike Psellos', Anna's *memories* were much deeper, somewhat stranger, adding a peculiar personal, even female touch to the nominally objective historical genre – which are the exact reasons why the references to her *remembrance* should not be considered as plainly *autobiographical*<sup>11</sup>.

The *I form* of the narration, the famous *ego Anna* from the very beginning of her work,<sup>12</sup> is in this respect of lesser importance than the quality of her memories, that confirms the use, even manipulation with the evident strength of *personal memories* when trying to prove one's argument. To be more precise, the *I form* serves as the vehicle of Anna's memories, as an adequate reminder that the objectiveness of her narrative is confirmed by the occasion that the author was also the witness, and that adding the subjective point of view only corroborates the truthfulness of the story told.

Maybe the best example of this procedure is Anna's description of her birth, presented in a manner of almost her own *remembrance* of her birth and the circumstances that surrounded it<sup>13</sup>. By the time, however, the reader reaches the chapter about Anna's birth, he is already very conscious that the author's memories are important, even essential for the validity of the *Alexiad* as history. A detailed, interesting story about the birth of the imperial couple's first child, in that way, receives the reader's special attention, strengthened with Anna's statement that it was she who was the first to be born in the purple (*It was me...*)<sup>14</sup>.

The special importance of the newborn baby was thus emphasized, and her

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*His Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, ed. J. O. Rosenquist, Uppsala, 1996, 127–141, and also in *Anna Komnene and her Times*, ed. Th. Gouma Peterson, New York-London, 2000, 169–186.

<sup>11</sup> M. Hinterberger, *Autobiographische Traditionen in Byzanz*, Wien, 1999, mentions the autobiographical remarks of Anna and Bryennios (107; 127; 141–2; 154; 301–3), among other Byzantine authors, but does not analyze at length their information, sometimes, it is my impression, dedicating too much space to modern literary definitions of *autobiography*, e.g. 33–35; 43–48. V. Stanković, *Komnini u Carigradu (1057–1185). Evolucija jedne vladarske porodice*, Beograd, 2006, 123–125; 192–196. Idem, „Nikephoros Bryennios, Anna Komnene and Konstantinos Doukas. A Story About Different Perspectives“, *BZ 100–1* (2007), 169–175.

<sup>12</sup> *Alexias*, Prologos 1, 2 (pages 5–6).

<sup>13</sup> *Alexias*, VI, 8, 1–5 (pages 183–186).

<sup>14</sup> *Alexias*, VI, 8, 1 (184, 86).



„coronation“ and engagement to Constantine Doukas followed in the already well established path of the author's personal history, which seemed true exactly because they were told as if they were only a *personal matter*, which Anna remembered from her youth. Seen in its entirety though, the story leaves a completely different impression – it is Anna's political manifesto, expressed in the clearest fashion in her whole History. Anna Komnene managed here to combine her claim to the crown – both as a birthright and as a consequence of her engagement to Constantine Doukas – with the strong demonstration of her brother John's ineptitude to govern, which was evident, according to Anna, already from his birth and his peculiar, always ominous, dark skin. By the time she was writing these lines, it is important to stress, her brother, the emperor John Komnenos, was surely already dead<sup>15</sup>.

Brought together in just one chapter, all these various themes and chronological levels were additionally strengthened precisely by Anna's authority as a *witness*, which she had already built from the very beginning of the *Alexiad*, with constant insistence on her own *memories* being the main source for the History she was writing, and the *truth* she was conveying to the generations of Byzantines, which were of her children and even grandchildren's age. Constantly interweaving her memories with the events from her personal and her parents' history, Anna Komnene succeeded in transforming usually neutral *autobiographical notes*, a relatively common feature in Byzantine historical works, into strong political statements.

Anna Komnene's *memories* included in the narration of her father's life achievements actually served a specific purpose, and had a clear intention which should not be underestimated (although that has been the case for far too long) when assessing the overall purpose and value of the *Alexiad*. Anna Komnene aspired to prevent her right to the throne from fading into *oblivion* among the generations that, although younger than her own, were already aging at the time when she was writing.

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<sup>15</sup> See P. Magdalino, „The Pen of the Aunt: Echoes of the Mid-Twelfth Century in the *Alexiad*“, and R. Macrides, „The Pen of and the Sword: Who wrote the *Alexiad*“, both in, *Anna Komnene and her Times*, ed. Th. Gouma Peterson, New York-London, 2000, 15–45 and 63–83, respectively.



## Localization of the Bible and the Politics of Memory and Oblivion

Sergei Averintsev (1937–2004), an outstanding Russian philologist and scholar of cultural studies, known for his studies on Byzantine Christianity, claimed that ‘the very idea of overcoming the past, that is, the idea of systematic criticism of a nation as a whole, in contrast to criticism of the nation’s high-rankers, is quite new and has had no parallel in the history of humankind’<sup>1</sup>. Averintsev was referring to the idea of overcoming the totalitarian past – a task ‘that all nations that had to go through a totalitarian experience, theoretically speaking, have to face’.

In my view, the idea of overcoming the Communist past in the former Socialist countries is not that unique and can be compared to the idea of overcoming the patriarchal past in the West. Both in the East and the West, *memory* and *oblivion* can be viewed as a step toward political reconciliation. As Cochran argues, the capacity to remember is vital for political success, but too much memory, or the wrong kind of memory, stokes the fires of revenge<sup>2</sup>.

Marxism views the history of the society as the history of class struggles and attributes all human sufferings and woes to social conditions and institutions. In the same wake, feminism sees the root of all problems in patriarchal patterns and sexist manifestations of power. Thus, Thomas Lough insists that expunging patriarchy and sexism from our culture will solve, for instance, the population overshoot problem<sup>3</sup>, a biological phenomenon used by ecologists to describe a species whose numbers exceed the ecological carrying capacity of the place where it lives<sup>4</sup>. The main difference between these two intellectual exercises to overcome the past is the following:

- the post-Communist East formally rejects Communist texts adopting new texts and restoring the authority of pre-Communist texts such as the Bible;
- the West manipulates traditional texts including the Bible to formally fit them into a new agenda.

Averintsev claims that totalitarianism was possible ‘insofar as it was an

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<sup>1</sup> S. Averintsev, „Overcoming the Totalitarian Past“, *Religion In Eastern Europe* xxiv, 3 (June 2004): 27–34. *Abridged translation by Olga Yurchenko – as appearing in Europaica No.35 pluslight editing by REE editor.*

<sup>2</sup> C.E. Cochran, „Joseph and the politics of memory“, *The Review of politics*, Cambridge University Press, vol. 64, Nr. 3, 421–444.

<sup>3</sup> T. S. Lough, „Energy, Agriculture, Patriarchy and Ecocide“, *Human Ecology Review*, Vol. 6, Winter 1999, Nr. 2, 99–125; Thomas Dietz, Guest Editor.

<sup>4</sup> T. Mosquin, „Human Population: Why set One Billion as the Upper limit?“, January, 2006. Ecocentrism Homepage. <<http://www.ecospherics.net/pages/population.htm>> (accessed 21 December 2007).



absolutely false answer to quite real questions'<sup>5</sup>. My stance on the issue is more moderate, i.e. I am inclined to view totalitarianism not as an absolutely false answer but as one of the possible answers to quite real questions. In the same wake, tolerance and inclusivity also represent one of the possible answers to the same real questions. Far from conceding to the extremes of non-judgmentalism, I nonetheless hold that labelling political and social ideas as being 'absolutely false' or 'absolutely correct' may be a step along the road leading to totalitarianism.

The difference between the East and the West in the approaches to texts in the process of overcoming the past can be explained in terms of their political and social development. After the fall of Communism, the post-Communist East needed new guidelines, new priorities, and new texts. It would be hard to start building a market economy and a democratic society with works of Marx, Lenin, Stalin and Brezhnev in hand. In the West, on the other hand, there has been no abrupt change of the political and social system, no revolution discarding private property and religion. Western civilization is deeply rooted in Christianity and despite the popularity of the secularization theory and the growing tendency to eliminate religious instruction in schools in many Western countries, the Bible is increasingly used as a tool in the construction of identities. One of the trends in modern Translation Studies is to view translation as a confrontation with the nonidentical, as a potential threat to identity<sup>6</sup>. This view assigns to translation an important role in the dynamics of self-definition.

As a result, focus shifts to interpretation of and manipulation with 'patriarchal texts' such as the Bible. Thus, Amador points out that current American feminist appropriations of hermeneutics pursues the „universal“ attainment of „truth“ through models interested not in activity but in interpretation<sup>7</sup>. Mary Ann Tolbert, George H. Atkinson Professor of Biblical Studies and executive director of the Centre for Lesbian and Gay Studies in Religion and Ministry at the Pacific School of Religion, believes that feminist biblical scholarship is profoundly paradoxical because 'one must struggle against God as enemy assisted by God as helper, or one must defeat the Bible as patriarchal authority by using the Bible as liberator.'<sup>8</sup> To find their way out of this paradox, inclusive translators assume the role of manipulators and active participants in the construction of new identities.

The concept of text manipulation and translator as manipulator usurping the author's role is not a new one. In a treatise on translation „An Essay on Translated Verse“ Wentworth Dillon, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Roscommon (c. 1630–1685), describes how the translator takes the place of the author. Thomas Francklin in „Translation: A Poem“ (1753) represents the translator as a male seducer who gains more power

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<sup>5</sup> S. Averintsev, *op. cit.*

<sup>6</sup> C. Robyns, „Translation and Discursive Identity“, *Poetics Today*. 15:3 (Fall 1994).

<sup>7</sup> J. D. H. Amador, „Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics: A Failure of Theoretical Nerve“, *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, Vol. 66, (Spring, 1998), Nr. 1, 39–57.

<sup>8</sup> M. A. Tolbert, „Defining the Problem: The Bible and Feminist Hermeneutics“, *Semeia* 28: 113–136. The Bible and Feminist Hermeneutics. (Semeia, No 28). Scholars Pr (June 1983).



over the text than the author originally had. In line with this concept Diderot (1745) seduced the „Inquiry Concerning Virtue“ by the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury turning it into his own *‘Essai sur le Mérite et la Vertu’*. Nowadays scholars like Theo Hermans, J.R. Lambert, H. van Gorp and Susan Bassnett represent the Manipulation School whose main focus is on the interplay between theoretical models and practical case studies, on the ideological shifts between the source text and the target text.

It is true that mainstream Christian exegesis itself gives numerous examples of ‘correct’ interpretation. Jesus Christ distances himself from the Jewish tradition appealing, however, to the prophetic tradition of the Torah. As a result, Christian interpretation of the Old Testament as the first part of the Christian Bible is predominantly allegoric. Thus, Christian exegesis firmly places Psalm 22 in the group of the so-called „Messianic psalms“ interpreting it as the picture of the Suffering Messiah. From the Jewish perspective, the overall theme of Psalm 22 is the plight of the Jew who, speaking as an individual, prays for an end to Israel’s long exile from its land and Temple<sup>9</sup>.

Even a quick glance at the approaches and principles in contemporary Translation Studies and Bible translation practice supports the opinion that the inventory of translation techniques themselves have not changed since Cicero<sup>10</sup>. The proposed new terms such as dynamic or functional equivalence, transparent translation, text manipulation etc. describe old approaches known during the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, and the Enlightenment. What I am particularly interested in is the strange interplay between the two opposing tendencies, Romanticism and Positivism, in contemporary humanities as a whole and in Translation Studies, in particular.

The Romantic tradition relies upon spiritual communing between author and translator that, in their view, can be established. As a result, it is claimed that the meaning of the original writer, of the Other from a distant age or culture is apprehendable and can be clearly communicated to the reader in translation. The Romantic tradition, which at the beginning of the 19th century focused on the Other, on the Poor, on the Oppressed, stimulated the development of feminism, the history of mentalities, anthropology, and modern cultural studies. The direct results for the translation studies are feminist literary and translation scholars, translations from small languages, and emergence of localized Bible translations.

Romanticism is essentially an anti-Enlightenment movement influenced by symbolism and mysticism, stimulated by feelings and imagination. This explains the overt emotionality of many contemporary translators and translation theorists who have clear stances on main social and political issues and defend them through

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<sup>9</sup> Y. Uri, „Does Psalm 22 Describe the Crucifixion Scenario?“, *Messiah Truth. Counter-Missionary Education*. <<http://www.messiahtruth.com/psa22.html>> (accessed 11 April 2006).

<sup>10</sup> L. G. Kelly, *The True Interpreter: A History of Translation Theory and Practice in the West*. New York, 1979; G. Steiner, *After Babel: Aspects of Language and Translation*, Oxford University Press, 1975.



their activity. Similar to the Romantics of the early 19th century, they are inspired by the pathos of revolution, of the dramatic changes in the contemporary society.

On the other hand, these scholars and translators are the product of the modern positivist science appealing to reason, rationalism, and empirics. As a result, intuition and imagination in their approaches clashes with reason and analytics. Despite the proclaimed aim to study the past, including the Bible, from 'inside', from the point of view of the people of the past, their real objective is to use Biblical texts as a basis for the creation of a new 'picture of the world', of new identities. This naturally leads to the concept of text manipulation enabling the translator to manipulate texts at various levels. The direct result for the theory and practice of the Bible translation is the manipulation with cultural values. Translators become manipulator and active participants in the construction of identities aiming to correct the purported wrongdoings of the world. Focus is not on literature as art but on literature as a tool for political and social change, as an instrument of education in the spirit of inclusivity, tolerance and multiculturalism. That's why I define this approach as 'pedagogical equivalence'. In my view, it is quite similar in nature to the requirements of the infamous 'socialist realism' seeking to put all arts into the service of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Discussing modern gender-neutral Bible translations, Minton notes that „often the Word of God has been made clearer in such editions, but the Word is sometimes changed and even distorted for contemporary politically correct culture'<sup>11</sup>. What we are witnessing today is an extreme case of what I call 'groupcentric Bible translation' or 'Bible localization', also referred to as 'niche Bibles'. Groupcentric translation is a logical continuation of ethnocentric translation that distorts the other culture to suit the views of a new audience. Another way to describe this phenomenon is to use the term 'localization' taken from the software industry that describes any changes required to adapt a product to the needs of a particular 'locale', i.e. a group of people united by their common language and cultural conventions.

The upsurge in gender-inclusive Bible translations since the 1980s is a direct result of the development of the post-colonial and feminist translation theories. The growing competition on the Bible market, coupled with the increased self-awareness of various social, ethnic etc. groups, has forced publishers to cater to the needs of these locales. Bible localization has always been a fact of life – there are Catholic and Protestant translations, there are Jewish translations, there are Orthodox Christian translations – all aimed at a special audience. However, these rather broad group divisions have been replaced by extremely narrow ones – we have Feminist Bibles, Gay Bibles, Rap Bibles, Black Bible Chronicles, Bibles in various slangs (Cockney, Aussie) and dialects (Geordie, Brummy etc.) These can be further split into Bibles for Women of Colour, Bibles for Young Women of Colour, Bible for Men of Colour, Couple Devotional Bibles, Teen Devotional Bibles, Surfers Bible and so on.

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<sup>11</sup> R. Minton, „Gender-Inclusive Bible Translations“, *CTS Journal* 9 (Spring 2003), 141–146.



Driven by the desire to offer a Bible translation that fits into the agenda of tolerance and inclusivity, Sister Mary O'Dernity (1996) makes „A Modest Proposal for Scriptural Translation“. Pointing out that modern scriptural translators have become more and more sensitive to the way in which language can be used in an inclusive or exclusive fashion, she insists that „If we are to be truly church, we must have liturgical texts that reflect our commitment to equality and inclusivity.“ From this point of view, she criticized the translation „Son of Man ascending to the right hand of the Father“ and offers an inclusive version of „Human One changing location to the near proximity of the celestial committee-chair.“ Envisaging criticism on behalf of intolerant, exclusive and sexist individuals, Sister O'Dernity assures them that „If you say it ten or fifteen times, it sounds very natural“<sup>12</sup>.

As Stendahl states, we are a Society of Biblical Literature which includes the Bible both as a classic and the Bible as Holy Scripture<sup>13</sup>. For centuries the Bible and its teaching have been used to construct identities in the Western world. Today the range of 'legitimate' identities is much larger than several decades ago. Facing issues of ethnicity, religion, gender-role identity and sexual orientation, people are confronted with restated contemporary questions of 'Who am I?', and 'What is the meaning of my life?' These questions are often hard to answer and many people struggle with them throughout their whole lives.

The Christian Bible is a layered book with a distinct history. After the emergence of Christianity, the books of the Tanach, acronym for Torah (Pentateuch), N'vi-im (Prophets), and K'tuvim (Writings), written and belonging to the religion and culture of the Jewish people, are adapted and become an indelible part of the Holy Scriptures of the Christian church. As a result, every passage of the Tanach (usually in the translation tradition of the Septuagint) may receive different and sometimes conflicting interpretations within Christianity. The origins of the Christian perception of the Jewish Bible can be traced back to Philo of Alexandria (20 B.C.E.–50 C.E.). The perceived teachings of Jesus Christ de-emphasize primary sources in the Jewish tradition, opting for the prophetic tradition of the Torah. As a result, Christian interpretation of the Old Testament as the first part of the Christian Bible is predominantly allegoric. In the words of the German-Jewish theologian Franz Rosenzweig, Christians hate Jews because they depend on them, because Christianity cannot succeed in the absence of Jews<sup>14</sup>.

Throughout 2000 years of teaching contempt towards the Jewish people, Christians kept pleading with God, „O be favourable and gracious to Zion; build up the walls of Jerusalem“ (Psalm 51:19). Only at the end of the 20th century did Pope John

<sup>12</sup> Sister Mary O'Dernity, „A Modest Proposal for Scriptural Translation“, *Catholic Dossier*, March/April 1996. <<http://www.catholic.net/RCC/Periodicals/Dossier/mar-apr96/proposal.html>> (accessed 10 December 2007).

<sup>13</sup> K. Stendahl, „The Bible as a Classic and the Bible as Holy Scripture“, *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 103 (Mar., 1984), Nr. 1, 3–10.

<sup>14</sup> F. Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*. Trans. by William Hallo. University of Notre Dame Press: London, 1985.



Paul II acknowledge that Jews „are the people of the Covenant, and despite human infidelities, the Lord is faithful to his Covenant“<sup>15</sup>. In the same wake, the United Church of Canada issued a statement acknowledging that „The One who is ‘our judge and our hope’ lives as a Jew, dies as a Jew and is raised as a Jew“, affirming the Jewishness of Jesus and seeking opportunity for growth in Christian self-understanding that exists through closer dialogue with, and respect for, Judaism<sup>16</sup>.

Quite naturally, the role of the Christian Bible in Western society reflects this ambiguous attitude towards Jews and Judaism. In his pioneering study of the hundreds of editions of the Bible during the century following the American Revolution Paul C. Gutjahr speaks of „a fervent longing to keep the Bible the country’s most physically and intellectually accessible text“<sup>17</sup>. Back in 1935, a collection of essays came out offering suggestions for increasing Bible reading. Refuting the notion that „the Scriptures have become outdated“, the book insisted that the need for character training could be best met by absorbing Bible teaching<sup>18</sup>.

According to Paul Gutjahr’s ‘too-much-of-a-good-thing’ explanation, the very existence of hundreds of editions of the Bible diminished the aura of the Good Book as the immutable Word of God. However, I am more inclined to believe that the problem is not the ‘aura of the Good Book’, but rather in the confusion among potential buyers caused by the proliferation of so many different, specialized versions.

In biblical translation, exegesis and freedom have always represented a strange and mystical union pushing translators (at least theoretically) to one of the two extremes (cf. Desnitsky 1999): 1) a strictly confessional translation, in which all ambiguous places are translated in compliance with the translator’s religious tradition, and 2) a free translation that rejects any previous interpretation of the Bible and claims to reveal the Bible’s „original meaning“. However, a completely „free“ translation is hardly achievable, because every translator will, either consciously or not, follow a certain exegetical tradition or else will create a paraphrase of the original text. Interpretation of the Bible is, in fact, an important part of our experience in this world, an exercise in humbleness and tolerance requiring both the capacity to remember and the capacity to forget. From this point of view, the Bible may be perceived as a record of this dialogue experience between human beings and God. The translation of the Holy Scriptures, in its turn, is an extension of this Dialogue with God into other languages and other cultures broadening the range of participants and increasing the diversity of (conflicting) opinions. Many see

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<sup>15</sup> D. Levy, „Sicut Judaeis“ and beyond – The Popes and the Jewish People“, *Jewish-Christian Relations*, 1998. <<http://www.jcrelations.net/en/?item=942>>.

<sup>16</sup> „Statement On United Church – Jewish Relations Today.“ 38th General Council of the United Church of Canada, August 2003. <<http://www.jcrelations.net/en/?item=998>>.

<sup>17</sup> P. Gutjahr, *An American Bible: A History of the Good Book in the United States, 1777–1880*. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999.

<sup>18</sup> J. Wishart, Vance, Beaven, Bowie, Wents, and Hough, *The Bible in Our Day. A Symposium*, Published for the American Bible Society by the Oxford Press, 1935.



the essence of religious life in the affirmation of their religious beliefs. At a closer scrutiny, however, it becomes quite obvious that religious beliefs are just different „languages“, different modes of communication enabling us to maintain constant dialogue with the Creator and to find support in meeting the challenges of day-to-day existence, to find the right balance between memory and oblivion.

## **Резюме**

*Борис Наймушин*

### **Локализиране на Библията и политиката на паметта и забравата**

Столетия наред Св. Писание е извор на духовната храна на европейската цивилизация. Столетия наред тази книга обединява и разделя християните и юдеите, обединява и разделя и самите християни. Столетия наред преводът играе важна роля в този процес.

Като цяло спектърът на използваните преводачески техники не се е променил съществено от времето на *Септуагинтата* и арамейските *Таргуми*. Предлаганите нови термини като например „динамична“ или „функционална“ еквивалентност, „прозрачен превод“ и др. описват отдавна познатите подходи, прилагани и през Средновековието, и през Ренесанса, и през Просвещението. Интерес представлява любопитното преплитане на две противоположни тенденции, а именно на романтизма и позитивизма в съвременните хуманитарни науки, като цяло, и в преводознанието, в частност. От една страна, ясно проличава романтическата традиция, вниманието към въображението на преводача, който трябва да проникне в съзнанието и мислите на хората от други епохи и култури, които са много различни от днешния ни свят, да се опита да разбере Другия отвътре и да представи това свое виждане на читателя. Романтизмът в основата си е антипросветителско течение, повлияно от символизма и мистицизма, опиращо се на чувствата и въображението. Това, очевидно, обяснява и ярко изразената емоционалност на много съвременни теоретици и практики на превода, които имат ясни позиции по основните социални и политически въпроси и ги защитават чрез своята дейност. В теорията и практиката на библейския превод това се изразява в стремежа да се набляга на определени културни ценности за сметка на други, в резултат на което преводачът взема активно и съзнателно участие в създаването на културни идентичности.

От друга страна, същите тези учени и преводачи са продукт на съвременното позитивистко научно познание, апелиращо към разума, рационализма и емпиризма. Поради това в подходите им интуицията и въображението се сблъскват с аналитизма и емпиричността. Въпреки често декларираната цел да се изучава миналото, в това число и библейските







**Memory and Oblivion in the Christian East, 990s–1200:  
Three Apocalyptic Cases**

Two of the most typical notions amongst the medieval Christians, needless to say, were those about the End of the World and the Second Coming of Christ. They are something as *topoi* in the sources of that remote time. In the following pages, I shall try to pay attention to some specific ideas and interesting details in this aspect. All of them can be seen in the Eastern-Orthodox world during the period mentioned in the title. For the analysis that is going to be presented here, I have used sources from Byzantium, Bulgaria and Kievan Rus'.

The apocalyptic texts are quite significant in any attempt to understand better how men and women and peoples, as a whole, reacted to the heavy changes in their already structured world. So we can ask ourselves, what did *remember* 'the new people' of God, namely the Bulgarians and Rus'ians, from the paradigmatic text referring to the „northern intruders“, called also „unclean people (of) Gog and Magog“, before the End of the World? And what did they *forget* as to the deeds of the real intruders in their lands? How did the unknown scribes manipulate the emblematic apocalyptic texts concerning the punishment of Christians before the Second Coming? Did they feel themselves ready to accept the attacks of the Magyars and other intruders in their realms as predestined for the End of the World mentioned in the Holy Bible and in the 'Apocalypse' by Pseudo-Methodius of Pathara as well as in many of the *Visions* connected with the names of the prophets Daniel and Isaiah?

*Memory* and *Oblivion* are *a priori* in close connection with 'time' and 'space', as well as with 'names', i.e. definite men/women or peoples. In pre-modern times, it was quite typical for a society to 'hide' events and people through *oblivion* or, sometimes, through changing important data. Such substitutions – from today's point of view we could even call them falsifications, – appear all too often in the so-called apocalyptic texts (and the visions of the end of the world that they contain), but also in „official“ texts, usually written by some monk. As a rule, the substitution in such cases does not occur in the structural cores of the archetype text (in our case, these most often are the aforementioned 'Apocalypse' of Pseudo-Methodius of Pathara and the 'Visions' of Daniel or Isaiah), but in its concrete „filling“ (usually names of specific regions, as well as of men/women or people, and/or nations). It becomes clear then that such changes depend on specific, regional contexts as well as on important historical events there.

It has already been commented by different scholars on issues such as the stable '*topoi*'/'*loci*' in this kind of texts, for instance Jerusalem, the notion of the 'last emperor', that of the 'unclean peoples (of) Gog and Magog', and Antichrist,



etc.,<sup>1</sup> which means that stability can be viewed on the level of ‘*topoi*’ as well as on ‘names/agents’. At the same time, one could also see a tendency amongst the ‘new Christian peoples’ to change some ‘*topoi*’ on the level of specific names and events, but without changing the idea of the *arch*-topos, which was usually connected to archetypal notion of *locus*’ or/and *name*’s sacrality. Thus, for instance, in the historical-apocalyptic texts in medieval Bulgaria it was quite typical for the scribes to change towns’ names known from the Bible, as names of the Holy Land, with Bulgarian ones, because since the 10<sup>th</sup> century (and the year 927, in particular) the unknown scribes thought of Bulgaria as being a Holy Land too, by definition, and its people – as the ‘new Israel’ and the ‘new chosen people’. In Kievan Rus’, too, the writers used to present the Rus’ people as the ‘new people’ of God, i.e. the ‘chosen’ ones, and this can be seen in the official Rus’ annals dating from 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries. E. Patlagean calls this phenomenon which was also typical for Byzantium „dual Holy Land“<sup>2</sup>.

Unlike the certain stability that some **spatial** parameters display, this cannot be said about the **time**-related parameters. Many scholars have already pointed out the different years in which the end of the world has been situated: at the turn between the 5<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup> century (the era of emperor Anastasius I), the years 992/1000 and 1033 (as a sum of 1000 and 33, i.e. the life of Jesus Christ and the year of His Second Coming on earth), 1492 and so on,<sup>3</sup> although according to

<sup>1</sup> Details see in, V. Istrin, *Otkrovenie Mefodiia Patarskogo i apokrificheskie videniia Daniila v vizantiiskoi i slaviano-russkoi literaturah. Issledovanie i teksty*. Moskva, 1897; N. Tikhonravov, *Pamiatniki otrechennoi russkoi literatury*. T. 2, Moskva, 1863; P. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, Edited with an Introduction by Dorothy de F. Abrahamse, Berkeley-Los Angeles-London, 1985; G. Reinink, ‘Pseudo-Methodius und die Legende vom römischen Endkaiser’, *The Use and Abuse of Eschatology in the Middle Ages*. Ed. by W. Werbeke, D. Verhelst and A. Welkenhuysen, Leuven, 1988, 82–111; Idem, ‘Die syrischen Wurzeln der mittelalterlichen Legende vom römischen endkaiser’, *Non Nova, Sed Novae. Festschrift Willem Noomen*, Ed. by M. Gosman and J. van Os, Groningen, 1984, 195–209.

<sup>2</sup> E. Patlagean, ‘Byzantium’s Dual Holy Land’, *Sacred Space. Shrine, City, Land*, Ed. by B.Z. Kedar and R.J.Zwi Werblowsky, New York, 1998, 112–126 – a concept developed by the Byzantines in order to represent its Empire as the ‘New Israel’. See the same mentality in some Bulgarian texts in, D. Polyviannyi, *Kul’turnoe svoeobrazie srednevekovoi Bolgarii v kontekste vizantiiskoslavianskoi obshtnosti IX–XV vekov*, Ivanovo, 2000, 116–128; Ts. Stepanov, ‘Universalno-regionarno-lokalno v istoriko-apokaliptichnata knizhnina v srednovekovna Bulgaria’, *Mezhdunarodna konferentsiia ‘Vizantiiskoto kulturno nasledstvo i Balkanite, Plovdiv, 6–8 septemvri 2001. Sbornik dokladi’*, Plovdiv, S.a., 122–129; Idem, ‘Imagining Byzantium from Dysis: Some *topoi* in the Bulgarian Apocalyptic Literature, 11<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> Centuries’, *Byzantium as Seen by the Byzantines and the Others*, Ed. by V. Vachkova, A. Milanova and Ts. Stepanov, Sofia, 2007, 108–118; V. Vachkova, *Simeon Veliki – putiat kum koronata na Zapada*, Sofia, 2005, 33–38, 95–101. For the Kievan Rus’ see, *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, T. 1, Moskva, 1962, Stb. 119: „Blagosloven Gospod’ Iisus Christos, izhe v’zliubi novyia liudi Rus’skuiu zemliu...“, as well as the so-called Rus’ian Sofiiskaia I Letopis’ – it promises to narrate „kako izb’ra Bog stranu nashu na posled’nee vremia“ – details see in, *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, T. 5/1, Leningrad, 1925, 8.

<sup>3</sup> More see in, A. Vasiliev, ‘Medieval Ideas of the End of the World: East and West’, *Byzantion* [Boston, Mass.], 16, 1944, fasc. 2, 465–497; P. Alexander, ‘Historiens byzantins et croyances eschatologiques’, Idem, *Religious and Political History and Thought in the Byzantine Empire*, Lon-



Christian tradition, the year of the end of the world cannot be defined precisely (see *Mathew* 24: 36; 1 *Thess.* 5: 1–2).

The appearance of the text where the „Ishmaelites“ are mentioned as intruders into the Christians' lands is connected with the Syrian author called Pseudo-Methodius of Pathara. His 'Apocalypse' was written in the last quarter of the 7<sup>th</sup> century. There, it was the Arabs-Muslims that were „deciphered“ as the Biblical people, who will fulfil God's commands as a punishment to the Christian Byzantines (because of the „lawlessness“ of the latter); through the Arab „Ishmaelites“ God was supposed to give a sign of the nearing of the Second Coming of Christ.<sup>4</sup>

The text of this 'Apocalypse' was soon translated into Greek, and in the 8<sup>th</sup> century – into Latin. The Old-Bulgarian translations appeared in the course of the 10<sup>th</sup> century and during the next century there were already compilations in the Slavonic milieu.<sup>5</sup>

The 'Apocalypse' by Pseudo-Methodius became a paradigmatic text regarding the apocalyptic and eschatological expectations in the Christian world. It is interesting to be pointed out that such expectations in Kievan Rus' were to be found mainly in the official, monastic annals, and mostly after the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century,<sup>6</sup> when the southern Rus' lands became exposed to severe attacks of the Cumans called 'polovtsi' by the Rus'ians. Here I would like to give a quote from a study by A. Turilov and B. Florya: „At the same time, the historical-eschatological essays constitute a truly unique phenomenon of the Bulgarian medieval historiog-

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don [Variorum], 1978, XV; T. Mollov, *Mit. Epos. Istoriia*, Veliko Turnovo, 1997; A. Karpov, 'Ob eskhatologicheskikh ozhidaniiah v Kievskoi Rusi v kontse XI–nachale XII veka', *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, 2, 2002, 4.

<sup>4</sup> The literature on this question is innumerable. For instance see, P. Alexander, *Religious and Political History and Thought*; G. Reinink, 'Ps.-Methodius: A Concept of History in Response to the Rise of Islam', *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, Vol. 1, Ed. by Av. Cameron and L.I. Conrad, Princeton, NJ, 1992, 149–187.

<sup>5</sup> P. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, passim; G. Reinink (ed.), 'Die syrische Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius', *Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*, Vol. 540–541. *Scriptores syri*, tomus 220–221, Lovanii/Louvain, 1993; A. Lolos (Hrsg.), *Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius*, Meinsenheim am Glan, 1976; W.J. Aerts and G.A.A. Kortekaas (eds.), 'Die Apokalypse des Pseudo-Methodius. Die ältesten griechischen und lateinischen Übersetzungen', *Corpus Scriptorum...*, Vol. 569–570/Subsidia tomus 97/98, Lovanii/Louvain, 1998; E. Sackur, *Sibyllinische Texte und Untersuchungen*, Halle, 1898, 59–96; V. Istrin, *Op. cit.*, 84–100, 102–114, 115–131; N. Tikhonravov, *Op. cit.*, 213–248; F. Thomson, 'The Slavonic Translations of Pseudo-Methodius of Olympus' *Apocalypsis*', *Turnovska knizhovna shkola*, T. 4, Sofia, 1985, 143–173; V. Tapkova-Zaimova, A. Miltenova, *Istoriko-apokaliptichnata knizhnina vuv Vizantiia i v srednovekovna Bulgaria*, Sofia, 1996; M. Iovcheva, L. Taseva, 'Preslavska leksika v prevoda na Psevdo-Metodievoto Otkrovenie', *Palaeobulgarica*, 3, 1994, 44–51; M. Iovcheva, L. Taseva, 'Dvata starobulgarski prevoda na Psevdo-Metodievoto Otkrovenie', *Kirilo-Metodievski studii*, 10, 1995, 22–45; P. Penkova, 'Bulgarskite prevodi na Psevdo-Metodieviia letopis prez XI–XIV v. i razprostranienieto im v Rusiia', *Starobulgarska literatura*, 2, 1977, 102–113, esp. 108–110.

<sup>6</sup> A. Karpov, *Op. cit.*, 4. In Byzantium, during the period of 7<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> century, such apocalyptic expectations and notions can be found in the annals as well as in hagiographic and profane contexts. For this see, L. Brubaker, J. Haldon, *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era (ca 680–850): The Sources. An Annotated Survey*, Aldershot et al., 2001, 273.



raphy from the 11<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century, which distinguishes it from the historiographies of both Russia and Serbia“.<sup>7</sup> We should however go beyond this true conclusion and define the reasons behind it: among the Serbians, Rus’ians and Bulgarians, the Bulgarians are the only ones who had a legitimately recognized ‘tsar’ and, respectively, ‘tsardom’ after 927, i.e. only they fulfilled the necessary requirement to be legitimately considered as ‘chosen-by-God’ Empire in accordance with the way this was presented in the Holy Scripture, in the traditions for alternation of kingdoms from ancient times and mostly in the Christian views existing at that time. This is precisely the reason why they developed such literary works even after the Bulgarian Tsardom was *de jure* destroyed by Byzantium after 1018.

In Kievan Rus’, under the year 1096, in a text written by a monk from the Kievo-Pechersky monastery it was mentioned that Kiev and its hinterland had been devastated by the „Polovcians“, e.g. Cumans.<sup>8</sup> More importantly, there one can find a text that mentions „sons of Ismael“ who came out from the Nitriv (*sic*) desert, i.e. (Saudi) Arabia [and Medina – *my note, Ts. S.*], then attacked the southern Rus’ lands and Kiev, in particular, devastating the Christian Rus’ land; according to the monk, from their stock appeared „Tortmens (*sic*) and Pechenegs, and Torks and Cumans“.<sup>9</sup> Right after that the unknown monk adds that Methodius of Pathara himself referred to them, a statement which is, understandably, not found in the original text of the Syrian author. But the same author also knows that „from Ismael“ were „the Saraceni“, i.e. the real Arabs.<sup>10</sup> Of course, such a mixture of real and imaginary geography and genealogy is not uncommon in the Middle Ages; the more interesting thing here is the drastic alternation done by the Rus’ian chronicler to the original text of Pseudo-Methodius of Pathara, who naturally does not write anywhere about the Cumans or other mentioned nomadic people of the Eurasian steppe from the period between the 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century and neither does he connect them with Arabia (the so-called ‘Etrivian’ desert).

Moreover, the Rus’ scribe mentioned also the Volga Bulgars as well as the Khorasmians („Khvalis“ in the text) as people from the Biblical Amon and Moav, respectively,<sup>11</sup> who were living not far away from Rus’. It is well known that both these people were Muslims. It is clear then that for the scribe his Christian Rus’ was thought as being encircled by enemies: Muslims (i.e., Volga Bulgars and Khorasmians, as well as Saracens) and the ‘unclean people’ of Gog and Magog (i.e., the ‘Scythian’ people of the North) who were expected to attack the ‘chosen people’, e.g. Rus’ians, before the appearance of Antichrist. In other words, in

<sup>7</sup> This is the opinion of A. Turilov. See A. Turilov, B. Florya, ‘Hristianskaia literatura u slavian v seredine X–seredine XI v. i mezhlavianskie kul’turnye sviazi’, *Hristianstvo v stranah Vostochnoi, Iugo-vostochnoi i Tsentral’noi Evropy na poroge vtorogo tysiacheletia*, Otv. redactor B. Florya, Moskva, 2002, 425.

<sup>8</sup> *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, T. 1: Stb. 231–232; A. Karpov, *Op. cit.*, 7.

<sup>9</sup> *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, T. 1: Stb. 233–234 – „...Tortmeni i Pechenezi, i Tortsii i Polovtsi“.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*: „sratsini“.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*: Stb. 234.



this text Rus' was thought to be the 'center' of the Christian world that should be attacked, according to the Bible and the prophetic words of Daniel, by the *arch-enemies*, namely the Ishmaelites and Gog and Magog of the North.<sup>12</sup> The latter were, at that time, mainly the Cumans (and other Turkic-speaking people) living in the steppes north of the Black Sea and Azov Sea after the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century; understandably they are not mentioned in the Bible at all! The hostile surroundings of this „Holy Rus“ are recognisable from the Old Testament prophecies of Daniel, from more subsequent prophecies (by the Sibyl of Tibur and others) and mostly from the ones dated at the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, i.e. the work of Pseudo-Methodius of Pathara, but, as can be expected, the names of the people are different and non-Biblical!

Furthermore, another interesting fact from the same article deserves to be mentioned – the directions from which God's punishment will appear have also been changed by the Rus'ian chronicler. Only, in relation to Kievan Rus', the steppe lies in the south, so the Cumans cannot be considered – if the specified text adheres at all to the point of view of the Biblical meta-text, – as „the people of the North“. Perhaps this „oblivion“ of the real geography of Eastern Europe has occurred partly due to the Cumans' real positioning on the map – during the 11<sup>th</sup>–13<sup>th</sup> century they inhabited the steppe area to the north of Caucasus and around the Black sea, – and it was right there too, next to the Caucasus, that the aforementioned Iron wall of Alexander the Great was erected against the Northern „unclean people“ of the steppe, according to the Old Testament and, subsequently, to Alexander's the Great 'paradigm'. Obviously, for the Rus' during the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century, the nomads were the *arch-enemy*, identified also as Gog and Magog (i.e., pagan nomads) and at the same time – judging from the aforementioned example of the article about the year 1096, – also as „Ishmaelites“ (i.e., Muslims). What we therefore see here is a mixture of the *times* (after all, *eternity* was the most important thing to the Christians!) and the *topoi*, as well as the peculiar doubling of the image of the nomad – he is not only one of the Scythians near the Caucasus Mountains, but also one of the „Saracens“ from Arabia. Needless to say, this is a strange choice since Volga Bulgaria was situated very close to Rus' and was populated by Muslims, i.e. the Bulgars could easily become the *arch-enemy* of Christian Rus' following the well known cliché „sons of Ishmael“. But the Rus'ian choice was made for the nomads in the south.

At the same time the people of Kievan Rus' were well aware of their real northern pagan neighbours, the Yugra and Samoyeds,<sup>13</sup> who were considered to be living at the end of the world. Again the monk who created this chronicle has de-

<sup>12</sup> A. Karpov, Op. cit., 13. On the eschatological expectations in Kievan Rus' in the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries, which are manifested even in the title of such an important source as is *Povest' vremennyh let*, see I. Danilevskii, 'Eskhatologicheskie motivy v Povesti Vremennyh let', *U istochnika. Sbornik statei v chest' S.M. Kashtanova*, I, Moskva, 1997; Idem, 'Zamysel i nazvanie Povesti Vremennyh let', *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, 5, 1995, 101–110.

<sup>13</sup> *Polnoe sobranie russkikh letopisei*, T. 1: Stb. 234–236; A. Karpov, Op. cit., 8 f.



picted the Rus' and Rus'ians according to the pre-modern visions – they are „the people of the centre“, pressed from all sides (with the exception of the west which was inhabited mainly by Christian people) by enemies, either pagans (nomads, or Yugra and Samoyeds – from the south and north respectively), or Muslims (the aforementioned Bulgars and Khorasmians – from the east and south-east). Thus, the readers no doubt were supposed to get the feeling that Rus', as the new Christian state and respectively God's 'chosen people', would put up the last resistance against the Enemy/enemies of Christianity before the Second Coming. The specific early Rus'ian chronicle however does not contain any allusions to „the last king“ (and his possible commitment to Kievan Rus'). The latter is probably due to the already commented upon fact that during the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century the Rus'ian state was not yet a legitimate tsardom, which it would become quite some time after the fall of Constantinople in 1453. However, one should keep in mind that the mentioned text is not apocalyptic in the narrow sense of the word.

Another interesting fact is that the Cuman invasion against Kievan Rus' in 1096 happened precisely at the time when the warriors of the First Crusade were already advancing on the real Jerusalem!<sup>14</sup> It is another question whether the Rus'ian chronicler knew about this crusade and even if he was aware of it, whether he was making some kind of an association with the *real* conquest of the *real* Jerusalem in 1099 by Western Christianity, or whether he has already interested in the *imaginary* Jerusalem, which he should have associated with the Rus' land.<sup>15</sup> It is more likely that in the period until 1200 the Rus'ians were more interested in the *signs* of the „end of the world“, marked by different invaders in their lands (first by the Cumans/“Polovtsi“, and after the 1220s – by the Tatars), than in such emblematic moments of the 'Apocalypse' of Pseudo-Methodius as the concept of the „last king“ and his involvement with the sacral centre Jerusalem in the „end of times“.

As regards the Byzantine understanding of Jerusalem and the „last emperor“ from the end of this same 11<sup>th</sup> century, which was „exemplary“ for the Bulgarians and later for the Rus' as well, Paul Magdalino, taking a stand on John Zonaras, writes the following: after the conquest of Jerusalem by the knights of the First Crusade the basileus Alexios I Komnenos (1081–1118), incited by some monks, considered going on a pilgrimage to the Holy city himself and leaving his crown there, precisely as it

<sup>14</sup> A. Karpov, Op. cit., 11.

<sup>15</sup> See some points in this direction in, Ibid., 11–12. Also see, I. Danilevskii, 'Mog li Kiev byt' Novym Ierusalimom?', *Odissei* 1998, Moskva, 1999, 134 f., 137–139, 141. On the Heavenly Jerusalem in Western Europe see, *La Gerusalemme celeste. Immagini della Gerusalemme celeste dal III al XIV secolo*, Milano, 1983; B. Kühnel, *From the Earthly to the Heavenly Jerusalem. Representation of the Holy City in Christian Art of the First Millennium*, Freiburg im Breisgau, 1987; S. Kobieliuss, 'La Jérusalem céleste dans l'art médiéval', *Le mythe de Jérusalem. Du Moyen Age à la Renaissance*. Ed. E. Berriot-Salvadore, Saint-Etienne, 1995, 101–115. On the image of the Heavenly Jerusalem in Russia and in the Eastern Orthodox world as a whole, see A. Lidov, 'Obraz nebesnogo Ierusalima v vostochnohristianskoi ikonografii', *Ierusalim v russkoi kul'ture*. Sostaviteli An. Batalov and Al. Lidov, Moskva, 1994, 15–33.



was described in the 'Apocalypse' of Pseudo-Methodius of Pathara as an allusion to the actions of the 'last emperor' before the appearance of the Antichrist.<sup>16</sup> And all this provided that it was not the Byzantines and their emperor, but the knights of the First Crusade who captured the Holy Jerusalem from the „Ishmaelites“!

The same author acknowledges the existence of another text, by John Tzetzes, which dates before the Second Crusade (1147) and according to which a persistent feeling that the West would hit Constantinople already existed among the Byzantines, i.e. in Byzantium before the middle of the 12<sup>th</sup> century there appears to be a reactivation of the motif of the Ishmaelites' invasion of Constantinople after the siege of 717–718 and especially after the 820s and the Arabs' attack on Sicily, when – based on the prophecies of Pseudo-Methodius of Pathara, – this assumption also arises.<sup>17</sup> Does this then mean that, in view of Constantinople's fate, the idea that the knights from West Europe would take on the role of the apocalyptic „Ishmaelites“ had already become widely accepted in Byzantium during the 12<sup>th</sup> century? Because the name „unclean people (of) Gog and Magog“ does not suit the latter, although even after the Great Schism in 1054 the Byzantines had ample reasons to think even worse things of the Western Catholic world besides its being called „unclean.“

However, if we were to go back to an earlier period in the Byzantine perception of Gog and Magog and the invasions of the „Scythian“ people against the God's 'chosen' Byzantines and the „saved by God“ city of Constantinople, we would have to acknowledge the fact that it was the Rus'/Varaggoi who were identified by the Byzantines as „the northern barbarians“ before the Apocalypse, following the prophetic description by Ezekiel of the people Rôš (*Ezekiel* 38: 2, 39: 1 – about Gog and Magog and among them – the people Rosh). This notion is very widely accepted in the Byzantine capital after the unexpected siege of Constantinople by Rus'ian ships in 860 and, of course, during the next 10<sup>th</sup> century. At the same time, not one of the apocalyptic scenarios depicts the invasion of Gog and Magog in Constantinople, or Rome or Jerusalem. But P. Magdalino also maintains that during the 10<sup>th</sup> century the Byzantines – in connection with the year 1000, or due to some other reason, – feared for the fate of their capital city and that among its dwellers a widely accepted notion existed that „barbaric people“ from the north or from the west would destroy Constantinople; according to Magdalino, during this century Byzantium as a whole became filled with all sorts of eschatological expectations.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> P. Magdalino, 'Prophecies on the Fall of Constantinople', *Urbs capta. The Fourth Crusade and its Consequences*. Ed. by A. Laiou, Paris, 2005, 49 f. Also see, Idem, 'The History of the Future and its Uses: Prophecy, Policy and Propaganda', *The Making of Byzantine History. Studies Dedicated to Donald M. Nicol*, Aldershot, 1993, 3–34; P. Alexander, *Op. cit.*, 162 f. – on the different versions in the prophecies referred to the leaving of the crown by the 'last king' in Jerusalem. On the place of the capital city of Byzantium in this kind of literature see, A. Külzer, 'Konstantinopel in der apokalyptischen Literatur der Byzantiner', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik*, 50, 2000, 51–76.

<sup>17</sup> P. Magdalino, 'Prophecies on the Fall of Constantinople', 51.

<sup>18</sup> P. Magdalino, 'Prophecies on the Fall of Constantinople', 47; Idem, 'The History of the



I would also like to note the important fact that the Syrian, Greek and Latin versions of the 'Apocalypse' of Pseudo-Methodius of Pathara mention that the 'last emperor' will first defeat the Arabs, i.e. „the sons of Ishmael“, and only then will an angel of God stop the invasion of the „Gog and Magog people“.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, nowhere in the Holy Scripture can one find a prophecy that the Roman emperor will win a battle against some hostile army and only then will he go to Jerusalem and give up his crown there.<sup>20</sup> Traditionally, after the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century the Byzantine basileus was considered the 'last king' who will have to fight the „Ishmaelites“ – during the 7<sup>th</sup> century, and the people „Ros'/Rosh“ – during the 9<sup>th</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> century. How this type of thinking affected the image of the Seljuk Turks after the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century has not yet been clarified enough, although it is clear that they fall into the cliché „Ishmaelites“ by being Muslims, as well as into another cliché – „unclean (Scythian) people from the North“, because they had been nomads not long before. Against this backdrop, during the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century the Rus', as was mentioned earlier, considered the „Ishmaelites“ and especially the „Polovtsi“ (Cumans) as their *arch*-enemies.

What was the situation – in this aspect – with the Bulgarian apocalyptic cycle that appeared after the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century? Who were the apocalyptic intruders there? Were they nomads coming from the north, from the „unclean people of Gog and Magog“, and crossing the border of the civilized people, i.e. the Danube River? Or, were they real „Ishmaelites“, i.e. Muslims? It is immediately noticeable that in the cycle of historical apocalyptic texts that appeared in the Bulgarian lands, the invaders before the „end of times“ are most often called „Ugri(ans)“/“*V'gri(ans)*“ (i.e., the Magyars), or „Pechenegs“.<sup>21</sup> The first serious clash with the Magyars was in the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, during the reign of Symeon (893–927). And there were many other invasions by the Magyars in Bulgaria during the reign of Symeon's successor tsar Peter (d. 970), especially between 930s and 960s. It is then clear that the Magyars' invasions were 'moulded' in the memory of the Bulgarians, in both folklore and in the written texts,<sup>22</sup> for they happened before the year 992 (or 1000?), i.e. exactly in time when the Second Coming was expected to happen. The events have shocked the Bulgarians also because prior to the approaching year of 992 (or 1000?), when

Future', 25. This thesis is shared also by A. Miltenova – see A. Miltenova, 'Istoriko-apokaliptichnite suchineniia kato literaturni i istoriografski fenomen', *TANGRA. Sbornik v chest na 70-godishnina na akademik Vassil Gyuzelev*, Sofia, 2006, 851. On the siege of Constantinople in 860 see, A. Vasiliev, *The Russian Attack on Constantinople in 860*. Cambridge, Mass., 1946; A. Kazhdan, 'Joseph the Hymnographer and the First Russian Attack on Constantinople', *From Byzantium to Iran. In Honour of Nina G. Garsoian*, Atlanta, GA, 1996, 191–192; *Photios Homilies*. Trans. by C. Mango. Washington, DC, 1958, 82–110.

<sup>19</sup> P. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 163, cf. 191 f.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 174.

<sup>21</sup> V. Tapkova-Zaimova, A. Miltenova, Op. cit., 135–136, 156, 198, 202.

<sup>22</sup> On the invasions see, V. Zlatarski, *Istoriia na bulgarskata durzhava prez Srednite vekove*, T. I/2, Sofia, 1971, 518–519, 542–546; Chr. Dimitrov, *Bulgaro-ungarski otnosheniia prez Srednovekovieto*, Sofia, 1998; P. Pavlov, 'Borbi za otseliavane. Upaduk na bulgarskata durzhavnost', *Istoriia na bulgarite. Ot drevnostta do kraia na XVI vek*. Otg. redactor Georgi Bakalov, Sofia, 2003, 276–280.



the „end of the world“ was expected, the Magyars, as a whole, were pagans and thus easily „identifiable“ through the cliché „Gog and Magog, that attack the Christian (i.e., Bulgarian) kingdom“ before the „end of times“ and the Second Coming. Moreover, the Magyars were entering the Bulgarian lands from the north (!) and were pagans (!) so thus easily fitted in the above-mentioned cliché of Gog and Magog.

Let us now pay attention to the Pechenegs. In the so-called ‘Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle’ dated from the late 11<sup>th</sup> (or beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup>) century the first real Bulgar ruler of Danubian Bulgaria – Asparukh (called there „Ispor“), is represented as a victor over the ‘Ishmailites’ and later – as the one who was killed by that same ‘Ishmaelites’ „on the Danube“.<sup>23</sup> Of course, it does not mean – as is taken for sure by some scholars, – that he died by a Khazar hand<sup>24</sup> or by the real Muslims, but of imaginary intruders entering the Christian realm through the well-known border of the Roman civilization, the river Danube. And at the end of the same text, the real Pechenegs were mentioned, this time ‘labelled’ as „infidels and law-breakers“ as well as „oppressors and fraudsters“.<sup>25</sup> The Pechenegs launched their attacks against the Bulgarian lands from the 1030s, they were coming there exactly from north/north-eastern direction, and had been living as nomads north of the Caucasus Mountains and between Volga and Dniester rivers at least from the beginning of the 10<sup>th</sup> century; so for the Bulgarian scribe of the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries they perfectly fitted to the cliché of the ‘unclean people’ of Gog and Magog.

Together with the Ugrians and Pechenegs, the so-called blonde beards, i.e. „blonde people“<sup>26</sup> were also often labelled as invaders in the Bulgarian lands. Some scholars identify them as the well-known Norman mercenaries in the Byz-

<sup>23</sup> V. Tapkova-Zaimova, A. Miltenova, Op. cit., 196, 199–200.

<sup>24</sup> On the notion about river Danube as a border of the Christian (before that – Roman) Empire and civilization see, V. Tapkova-Zaimova, *Dolni Dunav – granichna zona na vizantiiskii Zapad (Kum istoriata na severnite i severoiztochnite bulgarski zemi, kraia na X–XII vek)*, Sofia, 1976; T. Mollov, Op. cit., 33, 35, 67–69, 102, 105, 109 and n. 9; Ts. Stepanov, ‘Aleksandur Makedonski, Kavkaz i problemut za granitsata: osmisliane na prostranstvoto na tsivilizatsiata sred volzhkite i dunavskite bulgari’, Idem, *V sveta na srednovekovnite bulgari: Mezdu realnoto i vuobrazhaemoto. 8 etiuda*, Sofia, 2003, 14–27; Idem, ‘Danube and Caucasus – the Bulgar(ian)s’ real and imagined frontiers’, *Der Donaulimes in der spätantike und im frühmittelalter* [‘Miscellanea Bulgarica’, Wien], Forthcoming; V. Vachkova, *Traditsii na sveshtenata voina v ranna Vizantiia*, Sofia, 2004, 135–150.

<sup>25</sup> V. Tapkova-Zaimova, A. Miltenova, Op. cit., 198, 202. According to A. Miltenova (‘Istoriko-apokaliptichnite suchineniia’, 859–860), the so-called Bulgarian Apocryphal Chronicle was written „around the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century“, or, „around the first decades of the 12<sup>th</sup> century“. T. Mollov (Op. cit., 190) is also inclined to claim that the text was written after the battle at Levounion in 1091 and the final crush of the Pechenegs and Uzes by Alexios I Komnenos. It is well known that the Cumans who were mentioned in the same text launched their attacks against the Balkan Peninsula in 1070s–1080s. On the Cumans in South-Eastern Europe see, P. Pavlov, ‘Kumanite v obshtestveno-politicheskiia zhivot na srednovekovna Bulgaria (1186–nachaloto na XIV v.)’, *Istoricheski pregled*, 7, 1990, 16–26; V. Stoianov, ‘Kumanite v bulgarskata istoriia (XI–XIV v.)’, *Istoricheski pregled*, 5–6, 2005, 3–25; Idem, *Kumanologii. Opiti za rekonstruktsiia*, Sofia, 2006; I. Vásáry, *Cumans and Tatars. Oriental Military in the Pre-Ottoman Balkans, 1185–1365*, Cambridge, 2005. On the Cumans as a whole, see the numerous articles by Peter B. Golden.

<sup>26</sup> V. Tapkova-Zaimova, A. Miltenova, Op. cit., 93–94, 135, 155, 157.



antine army during the 11<sup>th</sup> century, more specifically Harald Hardraade and his warriors, whose help was decisive for the crushing of the Bulgarian uprising of Peter Delyanos in 1041. Only after the First Crusade did people start using this name to refer also to the Latin-speaking crusaders and the people from West Europe, as a whole.<sup>27</sup> In this last case, the marking is not explicitly done through either „Ishmaelites“ or „Gog and Magog“/“unclean people“ (and other such archetypical names), but with the help of a specific physical trait (and differentiable from one's own) such as blonde beards.

At the same time, these texts and especially the „Legend of the saint prophet Isaiah of the coming years and of the kings and of the Antichrist who shall come“ as well as „And this is the exegesis of Daniel“<sup>28</sup> contain a specific piling up of „blonde beards“, „V'gri(ans)“ (i.e. Ugrians/Magyars) and „Ishmaelites“, all in connection with battles between the Bulgarians (in particular, the so-called tsar Gagen who is indeed the real historical Peter Delyanos) and different „oppressors“ of the Bulgarian lands. These battles are fought in the region of Skopie, on ‘Ovche pole’ (i.e., the field of lambs) and ‘Graovo pole’ (i.e., the field of pea) and ‘Edrilo’ field, as well as near actual cities in modern Bulgaria, Macedonia and Greece such as Zemen, Pernik, Sredets (today Sofia), Velbuzhd (today Kiustendil), Strumitsa, Thessaloniki, etc. Obviously, the unknown Bulgarian scribes do not emphasize on the direction either, since the nomads in this particular case come from the west, from the territory of today's Italy, i.e. in relation to the Bulgarians they are neither a northern people (‘Gog and Magog’), nor a southern one (‘Ishmael's tribe’) and because of this they do not fit into the „paradigmatic“ apocalyptic scheme. It should however be taken into account that their very name, which has been known in the West at least from the 8<sup>th</sup> century in the form of „Normans“, contains an allusion to the North, meaning „people from the North/Northern people“.

The apocalyptic text called ‘*Skazanie* about the holy prophet Isaiah about the years to come and the kings, and Antichrist who will come’ explicitly notes that „the Ishmaelites will go out from the northern (*sic!*) countries, and shall advance on the town of Thessaloniki... [...] And the citizens of Thessaloniki will go out against the V'gri(ans)“.<sup>29</sup> The contamination of the archetypical ‘Ishmaelites’ with the real Magyars/Ugrians/V'gri here is obvious and does not need further explanation. Except one – that the direction of the attack is the ‘north’, while at that time and in view of the real geography the real Muslims could have attacked the Bulgarians only from the south.<sup>30</sup> So the unknown Bulgarian scribe forgot the

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 93–94.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 135 and n. 8, 136, 155–156.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 156.

<sup>30</sup> According to Alexander Nikolov (private conversation), these Muslims could be of Hungary, i.e. Muslim people who came there from Volga Bulgaria some time earlier settling down in the Hungarian realm. This could not be denied as a possibility, but the problem is that in the Bulgarian historical-apocalyptic texts there is no such a claim. For these Hungarian ‘Muslims’ and Pechenegs, who were guardians of the Hungarian borders, see N. Berend, *At the Gate of Christendom. Jews, Muslims and ‘Pagans’ in Medieval Hungary*. Cambridge, 2001; N. Berend, ‘Hungary, ‘the Gate



direction/place of the Pseudo-Methodius' 'Ishmaelites', but **remembered** something more important – that the intruders shall come in the sacred space of the Christian Empire in order to punish the 'God-chosen' people, i.e. the Bulgarians. What we have here, just as it was with the Rus' case already mentioned above, is a 'false' geography of the 'Ishmaelites', not that known from the paradigmatic text of Pseudo-Methodius of Pathara.<sup>31</sup> At the same time, what we see here are some real historical events in the Bulgarian lands from the mid-10<sup>th</sup> century as well as in 1040–1041 but presented in apocalyptic framework.

In view of this article's title, another *topos* found in Bulgarian apocalyptic texts is also of interest, namely the place of the battle against the „unclean people“ Gog and Magog. According to the Old Testament, it has to happen at Jericho's field, while the Byzantine apocalyptic texts point to the field near Joppe/Joppa (today's Jaffa) and the Bulgarian works talk of the so-called 'Ovche pole', but also of 'Graovo pole' and 'Edrilo pole'.<sup>32</sup> The place of the battle has been **memorised** by the archetypical text – the battle unfolds on a field! But why does the unknown author need so many different names of fields in modern Macedonia and South-Western Bulgaria? And if „Graovo field“ can be perceived both in the light of the adjective „pea“ („grahovo“ in Bulgarian) and of the area Graovsko in modern Bulgaria (!), then can „Edrilo field“ be interpreted as 'Odrino pole' (i.e., the field near Odrin, ancient Hadrianopolis in Thrace), as V. Tapkova-Zaimova and A. Miltenova assume?<sup>33</sup> In my view, we should not pass up another option for „translating“ *Edrilo field* by connecting it with the concept of the „kernel“ („yadro“ in Bulgarian), i.e. the centre, by making an emphasis on the phonetic aspect (*Edrilo* – *yadro*) and also by taking notice of the idea of the „last eschatological battle“ before the Second Coming of Christ, which by presumption is being fought at *the centre/kernel* of the holy space of the Tsardom.<sup>34</sup> By the 'laws' of mythological thinking, the hyper-significant things happen exactly at the *centre* and precisely because of this the „Ugrians“/“*V'gri*(ans) and „Ishmaelites“ are connected eschatologically with 'Ovche pole' and Sredets in this type of works.

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of Christendom', *Medieval Frontiers: Concepts and Practices*. Ed. by D. Abulafia and N. Berend, Aldershot, 2002, 195–215, at 200, 203 f., 207.

<sup>31</sup> More in this aspect see in, K. Ivanova, 'Messianskie motivy v bolgarskoi knizhnosti', *Messianic Ideas in Jewish and Slavic Cultures*. Ed. by W. Moskovich and S. Nikolova, Jerusalem-Sofia, 2006, 67–70; T. Mollov, *Op. cit.*, 110, 131–155.

<sup>32</sup> P. Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, 190, 192; V. Tapkova-Zaimova, A. Miltenova, *Op. cit.*, 155–156 and n. 19.

<sup>33</sup> V. Tapkova-Zaimova, A. Miltenova, *Op. cit.*, 156 and n. 21.

<sup>34</sup> The same interpretation of the phrase 'Mezina zemia', in that same kind of texts but from the cycle dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century – as 'center', 'kernel' from *Greek* 'mesos', see in, Ts. Stepanov, 'Imagining Byzantium', 113–115. Especially on 'Ovche pole' and the attempts this field to be connected to another important center – „Sredets“, the ancient *Serdica* – etymologically from *Bulg.* 'sreda', i.e. 'center', as well as with the Polar star – as an axe in the center of a sacred space, see T. Mollov, *Op. cit.*, 45–47, 105, 188–189 and esp. 185 and notes 5 and 6, where the author claims that 'Edrilo field' has a clear connection to the Old-Bulgarian word 'iadro', i.e. „kernel, pea“.



To sum up,

1) any of the Christian realms was thought to be '(in) the center' of the world, a 'new Israel', and thus – encircled by enemies. This notion was 'spelled out' mostly in times when the Second Coming of Christ was expected, i.e. in the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century, in 992/1000, in 1092, or in 1492. The kingdoms have 'objects' from *their own* real geography which they think-and-presents as imaginary *topoi* of the Holy Christian kingdom, more specifically of Constantinople and Jerusalem and sometimes – of Rome as well. So what we see in some Bulgarian and Rus' medieval texts is an interesting 'play' between *imaginary* and *real* remembrance and oblivion of sacred places, geographical directions, and 'unclean peoples', which had as their 'axes' and coordinates both the real sacred geography of ancient Israel and the real and/or imagined geography of the Bulgarian and Rus' lands, both being Christians' lands.

2) since the Rus' conversion to Christianity happened quite late – only after 988, one cannot expect them to be „tormented“ by the year 992, or 1000, unlike the „terrors“ typical for Western Europe, Byzantium and Bulgaria in connection with the expected end of the world and the Second Coming of Christ in the end of the First Millennium. Such anxiety among them can only be distinctly seen in connection with 1492 and the latest „calculation“ of the year of the end of this world (i.e., in the end of the so-called seventh millennium) and quite naturally it is directly connected to the centre of the Eastern Orthodoxy – Constantinople,<sup>35</sup> which was already captured by the Muslim Turks (according to the cliché the latter are *de facto* Ishmaelites).<sup>36</sup> During the years between the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> century the Rus' identify the Cumans and the Tatars as their eschatological *arch-enemies* by contaminating quite clearly „unclean people“ (according to the model they invade from the north, but in view of the real Rus'sian geography they come from the south) and „Ishmaelites“;

3) in the case of the Bulgarians, the appearance of „Ugrians/V'gri(ans)“ in apocalyptic texts written after the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century is obviously a sort of *anamnesis* of century-old or more *realia* because the Magyar attacks stopped after 960s, and besides, after their conversion to Christianity in 1000 the Magyars were no longer suitable for an apocalyptic scenario. So for the Bulgarians, the first „oppressor“ with an apocalyptic flair turned out to be the Magyar who came from the „unclean people (of) Gog and Magog“. The image obviously arises after 894 and before 970 and can be also verified from Bulgarian folklore data (from ritual songs, in particular) which mention „black V'gre“.<sup>37</sup> In mythology of Eurasia, 'black' means „bad“, but also „north“, from where it appears the notion of

<sup>35</sup> On the Rus' see, A. Alekseev, *Pod znakom kontsa vremeni. Ocherki russkoi religioznosti kontsa XIV–nachala XVI vv.*, Sankt-Peterburg, 2002, Ch. I and esp. 62–68, 71–72.

<sup>36</sup> On the notion of 'Ishmaelites' as a „label“ of the Ottoman Turks see details in, A. Nikolov, 'Nabliudeniia vurhu tsikula istoriko-apokaliptichni tvorbi ot X–XI v.', *Palaeobulgarica*, 1, 1997, 91–107 and esp. 95–96.

<sup>37</sup> T. Mollov, *Op. cit.*, 186.



„chaos“! From a chronological point of view, the second apocalyptic „oppressors“ of the Bulgarians turned out to be the Pechenegs (nomads once again, who came from the north and beyond the Danube, from the space of the „unclean people (of) Gog and Magog“; it is not a coincidence that they are all too often labelled as „Scythians“ in the Byzantine sources). Apparently, this image becomes established after the 1030s and until the end of the 11<sup>th</sup> century; it was probably further developed during the 12<sup>th</sup> century and especially after 1092 (in the light of the anticipation of the Second Coming in the year 6600 after Creation, which fell on 1092), but did not seep into the folklore, and neither did the image of the so-called blonde beards/blonde people, who were evidently „forgotten“. The third such „oppressors“ were the Tatars and mostly the Ottoman Turks, who were recorded both in the folklore and in the written sources. Therefore, for the Bulgarians as a whole, the peaks in the process of apprehension of the *arch*-enemy before the Second Coming were during the 10<sup>th</sup> century (personified by the Magyars/Ugrians as pagans coming from the north) and during the 13<sup>th</sup> and especially the 14<sup>th</sup> centuries (mainly the Ottoman Turks – as the „Ishmaelites“ *par excellence*). In view of all this it is rather surprising, especially since it seems like a counterpoint to the Rus’ian chronicles from the 11<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> century, that it is impossible to find the Cumans as an *arch*-enemy in Bulgarian historical apocalyptic texts, although the Cumans were situated to the north of the Bulgarians and were pagans as well – in other words, they fit into the apocalyptic scheme! (Maybe this is due to the fact that a lot of Cumans assimilated quite quickly in Bulgaria and even managed to launch royal dynasties here?) This is why the assertion of V. Tapkova-Zaimova and A. Miltenova – that in the Old-Bulgarian versions of ‘Apocalypse’ of Pseudo-Methodius of Pathara the name „Ishmaelites“ was used for „Uzes, Cumans and other Turkic tribes which have plundered the Bulgarian lands“<sup>38</sup> by invading them in the second half of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, – needs to be clarified. The only noted tribes in the historical apocalyptic literature with this name and precisely during this period are the Ugrians/Magyars and the Pechenegs but certainly not the Cumans!<sup>39</sup> We can thus paraphrase an opinion shared by the late Timothy Reuter<sup>40</sup> this way: „the past is not what one can find in the sources, but what he/she can remember.“ That means we can find in the (Byzantine) sources data about the Cumans’ appearance in the Bulgarian lands after the third quarter of the 11<sup>th</sup> century, but the unknown Bulgarian scribes who left apocalyptic versions did not remember them as intruders! At the same time, what we find in the Bulgarian written sources and

<sup>38</sup> V. Tapkova-Zaimova, A. Miltenova, Op. cit., 21.

<sup>39</sup> The first attacks of the Cumans to the south of the river Danube are from the reigning years of Michael VII Ducas (1071–1078), i.e. in the end of the 1070s, and the second phase started in the beginning of the Alexios I Komnenos’ reign (1081–1118). In this period, the Cumans’ attacks are strictly connected with the big offensive of the Pechenegs on the Balkans during the 1080s. More see in, V. Stoianov, ‘Kumanite v bulgarskata istoriia’, 6–9.

<sup>40</sup> Th. Reuter and J. Nelson (eds), *Medieval Politics and Modern Mentalities*, Cambridge, 2006, 281: „...the past is not what you thought; it is what you can remember“.



later in the folklore are Ugrians (i.e. Magyars), Tatars and Ottoman Turks. Therefore, for the Bulgarians, and contrary to the Rus' people, the Cumans – though nomads and living north of the Danube River at that time, – had never become an *arch-enemy*, apocalyptic *sign* for the coming of Antichrist.

As for the expression „blonde beards“, i.e. „blonde people“, it is obvious that it was used in the Bulgarian historical apocalyptic works to describe first and foremost the Rus'/*Varaggoi* from Kievan Rus', and this fact has been well known among scholars for a long time. This image has been formed in part by the military campaigns and plundering of Eastern Bulgaria by the Kievan knyaz Svyatoslav in 968–971, in part by the fact that during this period the Rus' were still pagans (!) who invaded the borders of the Christian (Bulgarian) Tsardom from the north (!), by passing the *frontier*, the river Danube (!). Those same Rus' people were well known in Byzantium after 860s and maybe even from the end of the 830s;<sup>41</sup> they are mentioned in the so-called „Prophecies“ of Leo VI the Wise and during the first half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century they became notorious for their new campaign against Constantinople plus a siege of the Byzantine Chersonesos in 986.<sup>42</sup> Only after this, from the 11<sup>th</sup> century onwards, does the image of the „blonde beards“ become attached to the Western Christians in the Bulgarian apocalyptic mental schemes. So in this type of Byzantine literature the expression „blonde people“ should have already been a steady *topos* by the end of the 9<sup>th</sup> century;<sup>43</sup> thus it is quite normal to expect it to appear as well in the Bulgarian apocalyptic compilations after the 10<sup>th</sup> century.

Finally, let us ask ourselves the following: Why did the Byzantines populate with Pechenegs exactly the regions of Sredets/Sofia and Radomir during the 11<sup>th</sup> century and why did they fill the area Muglena in Macedonia specifically with surviving Pechenegs and other late nomads after the battle at Levounion in 1091? Was it because these lands were very seriously damaged after being overrun by the Magyars already during the 10<sup>th</sup> century, and afterwards – by the armies of the

<sup>41</sup> P. Golden, 'The Question of the Rus' Qaghanate', *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, 2, 1982, 77–97; J. Shepard, 'The Rhos Guests of Louis the Pious: Whence and Wherefore?', *Early Medieval Europe*, 4, 1995, 41–60; Idem, 'The Khazars' Formal Adoption of Judaism and Byzantium's Northern Policy', *Oxford Slavonic Papers*, N.S. 31, 1998, 11–34; V. Petrukhin, 'Variagi i khazary v istorii Rusi', *Etnograficheskoe obozrenie*, 3, 1993, 68–83; Idem, „Russkii kaganat“, skandinav i iuzhnaia Rus': srednevekovaia traditsiia i stereotypy sovremennoi istoriografii', *Drevneishie gosudarstva Vostochnoi Evropy – 1999. Vostochnaia i Severnaia Evropa v srednevekov'e*, Moskva, 2001, 127–142; Idem, 'O „Russkom kaganate“, Nachal'nom letopisanii, poiskah i nedorazumeniiah v noveishei istoriografii', *Slavianovedenie*, 4, 2001, 78–82; Ts. Stepanov, 'Vladetel, doktrinerika i titulni praktiki v Iztochna Evropa prez VI–IX vek', Idem, *Srednovekovnite bulgari. Novi fakti, interpretatsii, hipotezi. Sbornik*, Sofia, 2000, 197–224; Idem, 'Ruler, Doctrines, and Title Practices in Eastern Europe, 6<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> Centuries', *Archivum Eurasiae Medii Aevi*, 14, 2005, 263–279; cf. K. Zuckerman, 'Dva etapa formirovaniia drevnerusskogo gosudarstva', *Slavianovedenie*, 4, 2001, 55–77.

<sup>42</sup> K. Zuckerman, 'On the Date of the Khazars' Conversion to Judaism and the Chronology of the Kings of the Rus' Oleg and Igor', *Revue des études byzantines*, 53, 1995, 237–270; P. Magdalino, 'Prophecies on the Fall of Constantinople', 47.

<sup>43</sup> More on the 'blonde beards' see in, V. Tapkova-Zaimova, A. Miltenova, *Op. cit.*, 93–94 and n. 17, 205, n. 30.



basileus Basil II (976–1025), and, hence, were very sparsely populated? Or, was it because the Byzantines knew that the Bulgarians recognised these lands, together with the neighbouring areas in the Struma River region, as the „centre“ of their former independent tsardom which had resisted Byzantium for so long up until 1018, and were thus hoping that if a mass settlement of alien, nomad element was initiated precisely there the Bulgarians would more easily **forget** these old notions of theirs? Or, was there a third explanation – that the Byzantines were hoping that exactly in the lands where lots of Bulgarian saints came to be during the 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries (namely St. John of Rila, St. Prokhor Pčinski, St. Gabriel of Lesnovo and St. Joakim of Ossogovo, plus the resurrected already during St. tsar Boris-Michael's rule (852–889, d. 907) memory of the 15 holy Martyrs of Tiverioupolis, as well as the cults of St. Kliment Ohridski and St. Naum from the 10<sup>th</sup> century)<sup>44</sup> it would be easier for the nomadic Pechenegs to be assimilated by the Christian Bulgarians? We will probably never learn all the reasons behind this move of the Byzantine rulers after the mid-11<sup>th</sup> century, but this should not stop us from posing these types of questions.<sup>45</sup>

## **Резюме**

*Цветелин Степанов*

**Памет и забрава в християнския Изток, кр. Х в. – 1200 г.:  
три апокалиптични казуса**

На базата на текстове от Киевска Русия, България и Византия са представени различни визии за „края на света“ и за „знаците“, които го предсказват. В Дунавска България, както и във Византия са известни т.нар. *руси бради*, олицетворение на русите/варягите-езичници (след IX в.) и по-сетне (след Първия Кръстоносен поход) – на рицарите от Западна Европа, но те не са мислени като апокалиптичния *архи-враг* преди Края на времената. В българските предели след 30-те години на X в. и преди края на века (преди

<sup>44</sup> T. Mollov, *Op. cit.*, 154, on purpose puts accent on the fact that three of the biggest monasteries there, namely of St. Prokhor, St. Gabriel of Lesnovo, and of St. Joakim, are situated around Ovche pole! Also see A. Miltenova, 'Istoriko-apokaliptichniite suchineniia', 860, who points out that the interpolated toponyms are situated on the map between Sofia, Thessaloniki and Skopie.

<sup>45</sup> John Zonaras claims that Bulgaria has been seriously damaged, in terms of demography, after 1018. See *Ioannes Zonaras Epitomae historiarum libri XVIII*, Grutski izvori za bulgarskata istoriia, T. 7, Sofia, 1968, 198: the Romans decided to use the rest of the multitude of Pechenegs that had survived after the battle at Levounion taking first their weapons off and then settling down them in *Bulgaria big parts of which were seriously depopulated*, because some time before that the Bulgarians were annexed by the Empire. This, by the orders of the basileus, was done appropriately, says Zonaras. Moreover, he continues (p. 204 f.), lots of Pechenegs died at Levounion but the rest were took prisoners and Alexios I Komnenos ordered that the young and steady men [of the Pechenegs] to be moved to Muglena district together with the women and their children; in Zonaras' time, they were still living there and were called Pechenegs of Muglena.







**Byzantine policy of oblivion:**

**The case of the saints Cyril and Methodius**

In 1805 the Greek author Athanassios Paros published in Leipzig the book „Ouranou Krisis“ („Judgment of Heaven“). Its second edition in Athens (1850) included an eulogy of Salonica praised as the birthplace of the „*Theophorous ke isapostolous Kirikas tis Voulgarias Kyrillon ke Methodion...*“ [„containing the Divine and equal to the Apostles Messengers of Bulgaria Cyril and Methodius...“] and ending with the statement that, because of being birthplace of the new apostles, Salonica receives the gratitude of all the Bulgarian „*ethni*“.<sup>1</sup> About thirty or forty years later a Greek physician in Resen, Macedonia (modern FYROM), tried to save his little patient named Simeon Radev, who suffered of strong fever, and revitalized him telling him something „provocative“, such as „*Do you know that Cyril and Methodius were Greeks?*“. The young boy quickly cried: „*It is not true, it is not true, they were Bulgarians!*“. It worked and the boy overcame the fever after this emotional shock – this is the story, described in the 1960s by the famous Bulgarian diplomat and politician Simeon Radev himself.<sup>2</sup>

However, not only in the time of the Bulgarian national Revival and the arising Bulgarian-Greek competition for Macedonia Cyril and Methodius were associated mostly with Bulgaria and the Bulgarians. It started already in the medieval times, when even Byzantine writers in their relatively scarce accounts on the Salonica brothers linked them mostly with Bulgaria and their disciples Clement and Naum, creators of the Slavic cultural centers in the realm of the Bulgarian kings Boris and Symeon.<sup>3</sup> Even the Bohemian tradition, bearing memories of the Moravian mission of the holy brothers, does not miss the chance to underline their alleged link with the Bulgarians and Bulgaria and only mentions here and there their Greek origin. In fact, the late medieval Bohemian and Slavic Catholic tradition, in general, invented also their Slavic names Crhu and Strahota (from *Metudius*, derived wrongly from the Latin *metus* and Slavonic *strah*), trying to explain their relation to the Slavic cultural milieu.<sup>4</sup> In Bulgaria itself, especially during the time of the Second Bulgarian empire, the idea of the Bulgarian origin of the Salonica brothers also was stressed and invented. This theory is still defended even by people pretending to be serious scholars and trying to find arguments proving not only their partially Slavic, but

<sup>1</sup> Й. Иванов, *Българите в Македония*, София, 1986, с. 119.

<sup>2</sup> С. Радев, *Ранни спомени*, София, 1994, с. 45.

<sup>3</sup> Ал. Милев, *Гръзките жития на Климент Охридски*, София, 1966; G. Soulis „The Legacy of Cyril and Methodius to the Southern Slavs“, *Dumbarton Oaks Papers*, 19, 1965, 19–43.

<sup>4</sup> Фр. Дворник, *Славяните в европейската история и цивилизация*, София, 2001.



also their Bulgar aristocratic descent.<sup>5</sup>

Last but not least, all the important sources about the missions of St. Cyril and St. Methodius and the creation of the Slavic alphabet are of Slavic or Western origin. It is very often stated that the Byzantine empire and Church and also the post-Byzantine Greek tradition somehow „forgot“ about the Salonica brothers, except of very rare occasions of mentioning their memory and deeds in the context of the Slavic alphabet and the beginning of the medieval Bulgarian and Slavic literary tradition. It is strange to a certain degree since, having in mind the fact that according to their *Vitae*, and especially the *Vita* of St. Cyril, the Salonica brothers were prominent ecclesiastical and political figures in Byzantium in their respective time.

In fact, their activities as Byzantine diplomats, clerks, theologians, philologists and missionaries are subject of their Slavic *Vitae*. We find almost no trace of these activities in the Byzantine literature, and the Salonica brothers were not that much venerated in Byzantium.

The *Vita* of Constantine-Cyril attributes to him extraordinary talent in the field of philology and theology, praises him as favorite disciple of Leo the Mathematician and Photius at the Magnaura.<sup>6</sup> Because of his success in the field of science, he was appointed to the position of librarian of the Library of the Patriarchate and also as a professor at the Magnaura, and thus deserved the cognomen of the Philosopher. Again according to the *Vita*, he took part in a mission to the Saracens (i.e., the Abbasids of Baghdad, ca. 851–855, the dating is uncertain), which in fact had a pure diplomatic aim, because it is hard to believe that the envoys made any attempt to convert the khaliph Al Mutawakkil and his subjects to Christianity.<sup>7</sup> It is well-known that at that time the religious climate in the Arab khaliphate was still rather tolerant and the forced conversions of Christians and Jews were exceptions. The „people of the Book“ had still relative freedom to profess their religion, of course, sticking to certain restrictions. It was not that far the time when John of Damascus was one of the clerks of the khaliph, despite of his anti-Islamic writings.<sup>8</sup>

Nevertheless, the participation of St. Cyril in the mission led by the future Patriarch Photius was presented in the *Vita* as a glorious personal success of the saint. There is an extensive account on his successful debate with the Saracen scholars there. The main topic of this debate was on one of the crucial differences that existed between Christianity and Islam, namely the dogma of the Holy Trinity, totally unclear to the rigid monotheism of Islam and rather complicated and even controversial issue in Christianity itself.<sup>9</sup> According to some interpretations, exactly

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<sup>5</sup> В. Игнатов, „За произхода на славянските първоапостоли“, *Български език и литература* (electronic version), 2007, 4.

<sup>6</sup> Климент Охридски, „Пространно житие на Константин-Кирил Философ“, ред. К. Куев, *Събрани съчинения*, Т. 3, София, 1973.

<sup>7</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>8</sup> A. Louth, *St. John Damascene: tradition and originality in Byzantine theology*, (Illustrated ed.). Oxford University Press, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Климент Охридски, *op.cit.*



after this mission, and already at the monastery of St. Polychron in Bythinia, Cyril invented by divine inspiration the Slavic alphabet (most probably the Glagolitic), in the company and through the assistance of his elder brother Methodius.<sup>10</sup>

Similar is the story about the Khazar mission dated around 860 (or, 861?). The task of Constantine, probably accompanied by Methodius, was again to enlighten, but this time the Khazars and their ruler in particular, on the issue of the Holy Trinity. The base of their diplomatic and missionary activity became the Byzantine stronghold in Crimea, Chersonesus, and it was here where St. Cyril studied carefully Jewish and Samaritan books in order to prepare himself for the debate with Jewish and Muslim opponents, in front of the Khazar khagan. Here comes the question of the Khazar conversion to Judaism, which is *per se* a very intriguing and curious issue. The conversion of the Khazars is attributed mostly to a certain Bulan, being khagan or *beq* of the Khazars, who lived in the 8<sup>th</sup> or 9<sup>th</sup> centuries. The famous King Joseph of Khazaria from 950s traces back his lineage to this Bulan. In the *Schechter Letter* (the so-called *Cambridge Document*) from nearly the same time, we find the name Sabriel for the first convert to Judaism, and some scholars use the compromising Bulan-Sabriel and put into the lineage also the Khazar king Obadiah who was predecessor of Joseph and probable descendant of Bulan. The rule of Obadiah, who was already protector of Judaism, is around 800 AD. Thus, the conversion of Bulan happened much earlier, probably in the middle of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, more than a century before the mission of St. Cyril. The book *Al Khazari* (*Al Kuzari*), written by Jehuda ben Hallevi in Spain at the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, tells us the story about the conversion of Al-Khazari, mentioning a Christian scholar who tried, in a competition with a Muslim doctor, a philosopher (i.e., pagan), and a Rabbi to attract „al Khazari“ to Christianity. Of course, the Rabbi won and all the three competitors of him lost, then Khazars were converted to Judaism, or at least part of them. All these events are placed 400 years before the time of Hallevi, about 740 AD.<sup>11</sup> It is interesting to note that Byzantium was known as ‘Macedon’ in many medieval Jewish documents, including those referring to the Khazars, namely the *Cambridge Document* or *Schechter Letter*, obviously with the rise of the Macedonian dynasty which came to power in 867 AD, just a bit after the Khazar mission. The story of the debate of St. Cyril and the Jews and the Khazars perhaps coincides in certain points with the story of the choice of Bulan between the three great religions in favor of Judaism.<sup>12</sup> It is therefore clear that the success of St. Cyril in converting the Khazars and other local people was not decisive.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>11</sup> See J. Hallevi, *Kitab al Khazari*, transl. by H. Hirschfeld, New York, 1905.

<sup>12</sup> Details see in, C. Zuckerman, „On the Date of the Khazars’ Conversion to Judaism and the Chronology of the Kings of the Rus Oleg and Igor“, *Revue des Etudes Byzantines* 53, 1995, 237–270; Хр. Трендафилов, *Хазарската полемика на Константин-Кирил*, София, 1999; J. Shepard, „Spreading the Word: Byzantine Missions“, *The Oxford History of Byzantium*, ed. C. Mango, Oxford University Press, 2002, 230–247; С.А. Иванов, *Византийское миссионерство. Можно ли сделать из „варвара“ христианина?*, Москва, 2003.



And then comes the last great mission of both brothers: the Moravian mission, which is relatively well documented and supported by various data of Western origin like the *Italian legend*, *Conversio Bagoariorum et Caranthanorum*, letters of the Popes John VIII and Steven V, etc.<sup>13</sup> Here, I am not going to follow this mission in details for they are relatively well-known. Because of different reasons, this mission in Great Moravia very early lost its original link with Constantinople: the controversies between the patriarchs Photius and Ignatius, the early death of St. Cyril on February 14<sup>th</sup> 869 AD, as well as the efforts of St. Methodius to save the Slavic liturgy and literature in Great Moravia, despite of the lack of support from Constantinople, the strong pressure from the Bavarian clergy and the refusal of the Byzantine rite, etc. As it is well-known, the Moravian literary center was destroyed very quickly and after 886 AD the Slavic alphabet and literature found their new 'harbor' in the newly-baptized Bulgaria of Boris-Michael (852–889, d. 907).<sup>14</sup> Thus the idea of Slavic liturgy and literature found its homeland and, compared to the Byzantine civilization, it became one of the most important distinctive feature of the Bulgarian Christian medieval culture, Christian in essence but Slavonic in sacred language. In the meantime, another possible target group of the Slavic liturgy and prayer,<sup>15</sup> called by professor Ph. Malingoudis „*Byzantinische Untertanen Slavischer Zunge*“, became almost Hellenized, with some smaller or bigger exceptions, such as the enclaves in Mani of Pelopponessus, or some Slavic remnants in Epirus and Thessaly surviving up to the Late Middle Ages.<sup>16</sup>

Thus, St. Cyril and St. Methodius were somehow forgotten in Byzantium, their activities seemed to be not glorified and well recorded, as it could be expected. Was it because their missions failed in general, from the point of view of the political interests of Byzantium, or they simply had not such an important place in the Byzantine policies in the 9<sup>th</sup> century?

On the other hand, one could observe a certain „Bulgarization“ of the deeds of the saints Cyril and Methodius, connected to the *Short Life* of St. Cyril and the *Legend of Salonica*, both dating from the 13<sup>th</sup> century. We shall follow here the motifs connecting the Salonica brothers with Bulgaria and Bulgarians, despite of the fact that in reality they hardly had any relation to them and only their disciples were welcomed in Pliska in 886 AD, after the crush of the Moravian mission.

The *Short Version* of the *Vita* of St. Cyril repeats the main facts concerning the Apostle of the Slavs and is dated in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, too. However, it contains certain details that are absent in the earlier *Full Version* of the *Vita*. What we find here is that Cyril was born in Salonica, being Bulgarian by origin, by rich and eminent parents, namely Lyv (Leon) and Maria. Then follows his mission at

<sup>13</sup> Б. Мирчева, Бърлиева, Сл. „Предварителен списък на кирило-методиевските извори.“ *Кирило-Методиевски студии*, 4, София, 1987, 486–515.

<sup>14</sup> I. Ševčenko, „Three Paradoxes of the Cyrillo-Methodian Mission“, *Slavic Review*, 23, No. 2 (June, 1964), 220–236.

<sup>15</sup> G. Soulis, *op. cit.*

<sup>16</sup> Ph. Malingoudis, *Studien zu den slavischen Ortsnamen Griechenlands*, Wiesbaden, 1981.



the river Bregalnitsa/Bregalnica where he baptized in the Orthodox faith several thousands people of Slavic origin and created for them the Slavic letters. And this event is preceding the famous mission among the Saracens.<sup>17</sup> The mission in the region of Bregalnica, dated in 857 AD, is the only event which links directly the Salonica brothers to Bulgaria, because at that time, this region was most probably part of the Bulgarian state and the local Slavs were subjects of the Bulgar ruler.

More explicit is the apocryphal text of the so-called *Legend of Salonica*, also dedicated in the form of autobiography to the life of St. Cyril („The Tale of Cyril the Philosopher how he baptized the Bulgarians“). According to the story told here, Cyril was born in Cappadocia, he studied in Damascus and later in Alexandria, at the Church of the Great Patriarchate, he heard a voice coming from the altar and calling him to go to „*ieziki slovinskie se rekshe Bljgare*“ („among the Slavic people, named Bulgarians“), to convert them and to give them the law. The story continues this way: Cyril explains that he does not know where is the land of the Bulgarians, and later he travels to Cyprus and wants to travel back home, but then he arrives in Crete and here someone tells him that he has to depart for the city of Salonica. He arrives there and the local metropolite John tells him that if he wants to find the Bulgarians, he must be mad for they are cannibals and will eat him. Cyril visits the market and listens here for the first time to the Bulgarian language and he gets scared and „*bi jako v ade i tme*“ („it was like in the Hell and the darkness“). One day during the Holy Sunday, the philosopher sits in the church in grief and thinks, and a pigeon flies to him giving to him a bunch of thirty two sticks of fig-tree, he puts the sticks in his pocket, but then suddenly forgets the Greek language, and when the metropolite invites him for a lunch, he does not understand a word. All the people of Salonica come there to see this miracle.

The Bulgarians hear of him and they come to Salonica led by the „*great prince of Morava Desimir*“ and the „*prince of Preslav Radivoj*“, and they fight for three years around Salonica with a lot of bloodshed and tell „*Give us the man, who was sent among us by God*“. They take him with a great joy and go to the town of Ravno at the river of Bregalnica. Cyril invents for them 32 letters. „*I taught them a little, and they learned alone a lot. Lord nominated them to transfer the Orthodox faith.*“<sup>18</sup> Needless to say, the whole story does not have anything in common with the real story of the Slavic apostles, who most probably never visited Bulgaria and only their disciples and followers spread the Slavic alphabet and liturgy there.

Only at a very late date the Salonica brothers were reinvented as prominent figures of the Byzantine and even the Greek national tradition. It is again very strange that they became not part of the so-called „Greek-Macedonian“ controversy on historical matters, such as the conflict on Alexander the Great and the Macedonian heritage, perhaps a result of the long Byzantine and post-Byzantine tradition of oblivion. Symbol of the lucky reinvention of the Salonica brothers in modern

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<sup>17</sup> Й. ИВАНОВ, *Български старини из Македония*, София, 1981, 283–288.

<sup>18</sup> Й. ИВАНОВ, *Български старини*, 281–283.



Greece, after centuries of negligence, is the marvelous newly constructed church, dedicated to them, a nice meeting point and place of veneration for the people of Salonica and their Bulgarian and other Slavic Orthodox guests.

## **Резюме**

*Александър Николов*

### **Византийската политика на забравата:**

### **Случаят на св. св. Кирил и Методий**

През 1805 г. гръцкият автор Атанасиос Париос в една своя възхвала за Солун величае Солунските братя като „богоносни и равноапостолни просветители на България“, поради което Солун бил заслужил благодарността на всички български „племена“. Идеята, че светите братя са неразривно свързани с раждащата се българска нация и нейната култура, личи ясно и от автобиографичните спомени на големия български политик и дипломат Симеон Радев, който дава красноречив пример от своето детство относно този факт. Изворовата база, свързана с дейността и живота на Солунските братя, донейде и изненадващо на пръв поглед, се състои основно от славянски и латински извори, докато византийската традиция не обръща почти никакво внимание на техните усилия и дела. Това обстоятелство влиза в известно противоречие с духа на житията на светите братя, които свидетелстват, че те са имали високо положение във Византия и са били възприемани като опитни дипломати и мисионери по време на императорите Михаил III и Василий I – епоха, в която Византия участва активно в евангелизацията на славянските народи в Източна Европа и се намира в остра идейна борба с Римската църква, впрочем обвързана и с този конкретен проблем. Константин-Кирил Философ взема участие и в други мисии, например в дипломатическата и евангелизаторска мисия в двора на Абасидите (850-те г.), а по-късно и сред юдаизираните хазари (860 или 861 г.). Впрочем (и ако това не е продукт на литературно клише?) в събитията около приемането на юдаизма от хазарите се съдържат смътни сведения за конкуренцията между мисионери от трите големи монотеистични религии, стремящи се да привлекат хазарския елит към своята вяра. Това съвпада и с духа на *Пространното житие* на свети Кирил, което свидетелства за подобни негови усилия по време на Сарацинската и Хазарската мисия. Изненадващо обаче във византийските източници не откриваме никакви сведения по този въпрос. От друга страна, особено от XIII в. насетне, делото на светите солунски братя категорично се обвързва с България и българите; нещо повече, дори им се приписва български произход. Тази връзка откриваме не само в българската сред-



**The Old Churches in the Village of Dobrina near Provadiya –  
the Road from Oblivion to New Myths**

When a monument in a town or a village with a long and turbulent history is studied and discussed on its own, without being related to the history of the entire settlement and other similar monuments, this usually leads to incomplete and imprecise results. In some cases, these results even lead to errors and creation of myths. This happened to St Theodore church in the village of Dobrina, Provadiya municipality in Bulgaria. The village has gone through many changes during the last six centuries of its history. The 19th century, brimming over with military conflicts taking place on the territory of present-day Northeast Bulgaria, led to an almost complete change of the population, the culture of inhabitants and the plan of this village. The exact time span and the specific reasons which brought these important changes have fallen into oblivion due to the lack of information in the written sources. Until present archaeological excavations have not been carried out there either.

After visiting the village in 1884 Konstantin Jireček wrote: „I have been hearing about the settlement called Dobrina (Dizdarköy in Turkish) for a long time which is believed to resemble Arbanasi near Tarnovo ... In 1595 Pavel Djordjic also mentioned Dobrina as being a Christian village ... The village of Dobrina is situated ca. 162 m higher than Provadia, the latter lying ca. 60 m above the sea level. The old cobblestone pavement on the streets, two big fountains and the grain storages made of elegantly shaped square stones suggest that in the past it was a lovely little town but the present-day miserable small huts surrounded by exuberant nettles and thistle thorns create the impression of a semi-abandoned settlement. ... The legends speak that the place was once inhabited by rich Albanian merchants who lived in houses with iron roofs, and in this period Dobrina was a town with 80 workshops for making big metal vessels, while Provadiya was just a village. They say that the rich Greek ladies from Messemvria and Anchialo came here on a pilgrimage. The little town was destroyed by two attacks in the „Kozak war“ (in 1829) during the reign of Tsar Nikolay, and once again before that, probably during the reign of Empress Ekaterina; people say that the town also suffered from the attacks of the *dağli* or *kırcalı*.“ K. Jireček explicitly stated that very few of the old inhabitants (he used the Turkish word *yerli*) had remained to live in the village and the new settlers were a mixture of people who had arrived from the present-day town of Nova Zagora probably ca. 1860, *gagauzi* and new colonists (probably arriving from the Kırklise region after the Russian-Turkish war in 1877–78)<sup>1</sup>. This almost complete change of the population is one of the factors

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<sup>1</sup> Иречек, К. *Пътувания по България*. София, 1974, 924–925.



resulting in an oblivion concerning the actual history of the village and the region as well and the search by the inheritors/descendants of a new identity and way of self-confirmation by the means of new mythology.

Prof. Jireček was impressed mostly by two of the examples of the old architecture in the village of Dobrina – St Theodore church and the Holy Virgin church – and left notes on their state of preservation. The vegetation covering St Theodore church was recently removed, the building was renovated and it began to function as a church of the liberated village. The Holy Virgin church resembled the other one in construction and building technique but was all in ruins. The apse was the only surviving part and traces of wall paintings were visible there.<sup>2</sup> In 1906 the ruins were removed and a new village church – The Nativity of the Theotokos – was erected on its place. St Theodore church fell into oblivion and ran to weeds again. In 1968 the building was declared a monument of culture of local importance. Modern architectural record and documentation was carried out as well as some consolidation activities. The Provadiya region is situated in one of the active seismic areas in modern Bulgaria and several earthquakes have threatened to destroy the stone vault of the church. Since the church was deeply dug into the ground which increased the humidity in the building significantly and due to the reasons listed above, new consolidation activities were undertaken in 2005 and a new roof was constructed to protect it from the rain and the vegetation which had grown on the vault. Removal of the debris as well as unregulated archaeological excavations were carried out both inside the church and in the church courtyard in the 1970s. The reviving public attention to the church which returned periodically, the birth of myths related to it, the development of several academic hypotheses, the good state of preservation as well as the necessity of proper conservation and socialization of the building lead to the recent archaeological excavations carried out in 2006.<sup>3</sup>

St Theodore church (Fig. 1) is situated in the middle of a small courtyard shaped as an irregular polygon. The building is deeply dug into the ground, deeper in the northern part due to the fact that the surface is slightly slanting down from north to south. The floor lies 1.50 m lower compared to the present-day ground surface to the south of the church. It is a single nave, single apse church and consists of an altar apse, a space in front of the apse, a naos and a narthex (Fig. 2). Its total inner length is 24.30 m and the width is 6.38/6.68 m (i.e., the proportion between the length and the width is 3.72:1). One of the entrances, namely the southern one, is accessible by an exterior staircase made from stones. It is covered by an exterior vault and the interior part of its corners is decorated. The western entrance is rectangular and the surface of its threshold lies 1.30 m higher than the surface of the southern one. Currently there are three steps there, leading to the narthex. The church has seven windows – five rectangular ones (two on the western wall and three in the eastern part of the southern wall), a small

<sup>2</sup> Ibidem, 925.

<sup>3</sup> Горянова, С. „Археологическо проучване на църквата „свети Теодор“ в с. Добрина, община Провадия“, *Археологически открития и разкопки през 2006 г.*, София, 2007, 453–455.



quadrangular opening at the apse and a narrow window-recess in the western part of the southern wall. There are nine ventilation openings shaped as inverted frustum of a pyramid in the southern part of the vault.

The apse (Fig. 3) is wide, semi-round in shape and its diameter is 3.20 m. A two-step synthrone or a bench for the church chorus was made there. A column supporting the table of oblation has survived in the middle. There is a semi-round vaulted niche in the northern wing, situated ca. 0.80 m above the floor and a deep trapezoid niche in the southern wing, situated a little lower. Niches of various shapes and sizes are situated in the eastern parts of edges of the northern and the southern walls.

The space in front of the apse is covered with solid stone and marble slabs. Additional incisions are visible on the northern and the southern wall at the marginal area between the apse and the naos, made for fixing the wooden iconostasis which stayed in the church until 1906 and was transferred after that in the newly constructed village church.

The current condition of the church and according to K. Jireček's description there has been no floor cover in the naos; there is only a 30 cm wide curb along the wall which is made from stone slabs in which holes with diameter 0.10/0.13 m were drilled for fixing the furniture.

The 6.25 m long narthex lies 0.45 m above the surface of the naos. The two premises are separated by a low wall (0.50 m wide) made from crushed stones connected with clay, its eastern face is plastered with mortar.

The church is made entirely of parallelepiped-shaped limestone blocks, densely arranged and bound by very thin white mortar. The vault is also made from stone blocks and covers the complete width of the building. The walls are 1.10 m thick.

Archaeological excavations were made inside the church and in the courtyard in order to verify the foundations of the church and a probable presence of remains of earlier constructions. It was found out that the foundations of the church were very shallow and consist of one row of stone blocks dug into the ground to a depth of 0.31 m. It is worth noting that the church is very deeply dug into the terrain, the stone blocks actually line the trench and eliminate the need of deep foundations. The various type of fills recorded in the naos are due to various activities related to leveling the floor for the floor cover and in some cases a result from unregulated excavations. Remains of wood were discovered at the southern wall only; it was used for fixing the wooden iconostasis to the wall, the same one, which was made after the church renovation in the last quarter of the 19th century.

The screen wall separating the narthex is a result from the reconstruction of the inner space. It is constructed on top of a layer of dark brown clay sealing the virgin layer of light yellow sandy soil. The original floor level consists of fired clay which is 2 cm thick. It lies 0.04 m higher than the level of the threshold of the southern entrance. The curb made from stone slabs with drilled round holes for fixing the furniture continues along the northern and the western walls. Its level is



ca. 5–7 cm higher than the level of the floor. The staircase leading to the western entrance is probably not the original one as well as the two semi-round segments serving as steps from the naos to the gallery.

Graffiti inscriptions, Cyrillic and Greek signs were found on the exterior of the church walls, especially on the sides of the western and the southern entrance. In one of the graffiti inscriptions (the most readable one indeed), situated on the exterior of the western wall, the following words can be distinguished: „Andon Lavriot“ written in Cyrillic letters. The date of the graffiti is still under discussion.

One of the trenches in the church courtyard yielded a burial of a young woman at a depth of 1 m. The grave pit is not clearly detectable in the ground. There are no traces of a coffin. Christian rituals had been observed during the burial. The arms are folded in the elbows and the wrists are placed on the abdomen. A blue glass bracelet placed on the right arm was left as a grave gift. Two copper earrings with drop-shaped pendants, which could have been silver-plated or tin-plated, were discovered under the skull.<sup>4</sup> Although there is no complete analysis of the finds, the shape and the technique provide grounds to date the personal ornaments in the period after the beginning of the 16th century.

The information about the reconstructions of the building and the specific features of its construction provided by the archaeological excavations lead to the preliminary hypothesis that originally it could have been designed as a building with public and economic purposes, which subsequently was used as a place for the Christian cult celebration.<sup>5</sup> However, in view of the high level of humidity of the building, such decision does not seem felicitous enough. It was most probably the reason to abandon the building in the early 20th century and to erect the new The Nativity of the Theotokos church (fig. 4) one, on top of the remains of the second church mentioned by K. Jireček. Archaeological excavations have not been carried out at this church.

A century after the removal of the remains of The Holy Virgin church and the construction of the new church of Dobrina devoted to the same patron, the notes and the published report by K. Jireček's remain the only information which has survived. Another Czech – K. Škorpil – has rendered exceptional services to the establishment and the development of the archaeology in Bulgaria. He surveyed and recorded immovable monuments of the cultural heritage in the Provadiya region as well. My study on the archives related to his activity, kept in the Archive Depot at the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, lead to a new discovery on the history of the churches in the village of Dobrina. In a period of 20 years (from the late 1880s until the late 1910s) K. Škorpil surveyed several times the vicinities of the Old Bulgarian capitals Pliska and Preslav reaching Varna. He made numerous observations and notes on the fortification facilities and other sites in the regions of Madara, Provadiya

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem, 455.

<sup>5</sup> Горянова, С. „Църквата „Свети Теодор“ в с. Добрина, Провадийско – митове, хипотези, реалности“, *Laurea. In honorem Margaritae Vaklinova, Книга II*, София, 2009, 351.



as well as the Devnya and Avren plateaus. While surveying the above listed areas, he paid attention to the village of Dobrina as well. His notes on the subject are very brief, part of them repeating the information provided by K. Jireček and some European travelers. He entered in his diary as newly recorded monuments the Thracian burial mounds at the village which have probably been related to the ritual practices of the population that had inhabited the Provadiya fortress and had made the burial structures cut into the surrounding rocks. A white-and-black photo measuring 22 x 15 cm is also kept in the Academic archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.<sup>6</sup> Apparently when the photo was taken the light was not very favorable. The contrast, due to the quality of the technical equipment at that time, is also not good enough to reveal some of the details on the picture. These circumstances put some limitations on the possibilities for commenting the image.

The shot (fig. 5) shows a moment of the removal of the ruins of the church. This activity is carried out by more than 10 individuals of various age and sex. There is no date on the photo but there is an inscription that reads „Ruins. Church the village of Dobrina“. An assumption about the date can be made based on K. Škorpil's brief note on the village, written in a mixture of Czech and Bulgarian, in the upper right corner of which he had put the year 1906.<sup>7</sup> (fig. 6) Probably he had documented the beginning of the activities related to the removal of the ruins from the terrain and the construction of the new church. Additional investigations can throw light on the question whether these activities were carried out under a professional supervision and how they had been recorded in the documentation of the Regional Historical museum – Varna, the Archaeological Society in Varna, or the Varna bishopric.

The central part of the picture is occupied by the survived church apse made from rectangular blocks of various size, arranged in regular rows. The blocks form an even inner face of the wall. It is hard to judge from the picture but most probably the stone blocks were bound by a thin layer of mortar similar to St Theodore walls. The apsidal conch is semi-round and its upper part ended with a semi-calotte. In the central part, there is a large niche with a peaked arch and most probably flat back part. Above the niche, at the beginning of the curve of the semi-calotte, there is a small quadrangular window, slightly shifted to the north of the center. In the northern part of the curve of the apse there is a quadrangular niche, whose size is similar to the one of the window. The photo does not provide information whether such niche existed in the southern part of the curve of the apse as well. From the two sides of the eastern wall of the church, the northern one where the niche of the prothesis was situated, was better preserved. The niche had a flat back part. Its upper part was vaulted by a semi-round arch made from especially designed segment-shaped blocks, the same as the ones used for constructing the arch of the apse. The southern side of the eastern wall was more badly destroyed,

<sup>6</sup> Science archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, f. 165 K, op. 1, a.u. 546, p. 1.

<sup>7</sup> Science archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, f. 165 K, op. 1, a.u. 420, p. 102.



the ruins had not yet been removed when the picture was taken and that is why no details of its construction are visible on it. The current state of the ruins does not provide information about the roof construction of the church – whether it was vaulted, similar to St Theodore church, or had a gabled roof. Judging by the bulk of the stones of the ruins which had not been removed yet and the positioning of the eleven human figures (four of them are partially visible only) reveal that the old Holy Virgin church was also deeply dug into the ground. Later, during the reconstruction of the building, the terrain was completely changed and the latest building is lying on the ground level.

The mortar plaster was preserved on the walls of the apse and the apsidal niche as well as on the niche of the prothesis. Pieces of the wall paintings of the church have also survived on these spots. As described also by K. Jireček, there were eight full-length figures of saints depicted in the apse – four at the southern and four at the northern side of the niche. These are eight of the Fathers of the church included in the *Adoration of Victim* scene. (fig. 7) The image depicted in the niche is not visible due to the deep shadow or the damaged plaster. In view of the composition, an abstract symbol of the Jesus Christ's sacrifice or an image of the child Jesus Christ could be depicted. K. Jireček mentioned that in 1884 there still remained pieces of Greek inscriptions although they might have been unreadable as early as that time since he did not describe or copy them. K. Jireček's text does not provide information whether they were inscriptions related to the images or liturgical or biblical texts. The usual characters in these scenes are the saints Basil the Great, John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nazianzus, Athanasius of Alexandria, etc. However, it is impossible to discern from the available photo who of them were represented there and how they were arranged. The figures are as tall as the central niche in the apse. The depicted are mature men. Some of them are dark haired, and others have white hair and beard. Even though it is difficult to discern, it can be observed that almost all figures have slightly curly hair and beard, well arranged, nicely depicted by the softness of the line. They are dressed in the usual white phelonions, decorated with crosses (highly defaced) and all wear omophorions. The figures are depicted *en face* or  $\frac{3}{4}$  view. The faces, turned to the center of the apse, are also depicted in the  $\frac{3}{4}$  view. The figures are standing up-right, only the first one at the center in each of the groups has his head slightly bent forward. The bodies are calm, well-balanced, without expressiveness in the movement. Each of the Fathers holds a scroll in his slightly folded in the elbows and raised hands but the images of the scroll are highly defaced as well.

Above the figures of the saints there were twelve round medallions (as described by K. Jireček)<sup>8</sup>, inside which are depicted busts of saints with shortened proportions but the images are highly defaced and difficult to discern on the photograph. The image in the niche of the prothesis is also impossible to identify.

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<sup>8</sup> Иречек, К. Op.cit., 925.



I can only say that either its colours were rather dark or the niche was blackened by the smoke of the candles.

The faint traces of the decoration at the lower part of the wall reveal that it consisted of geometric ornaments. A wide band of rhombs, alternating along the line of the short diagonal, are painted under the legs of the figures. Inside each of these rhombs there were probably concentrically alternating rhombs painted in light and dark colour, resembling a decoration of marble slabs of various colours.

The discovery of the photo in K. Škorpil's archive would have been just another piece of information related to an already destroyed interesting architectural monument if it had not matched so well the general archaeological and cultural picture of the Dobrina settlement. Although limited, the information provided by the photo can facilitate the creation of the general assessment of the nature of the settlement and to a certain extent – the date of the rest of the monuments there, the date of St Theodore church especially. In my earlier article on the above mentioned church I have focused on the ethnical characteristic of the temple as well as on the possible date of its construction, notwithstanding the scarce information provided by the plan and the construction of the building as well as the excavated burial from the cemetery in the church courtyard related to these issues. The attempts of studying and commenting on the history of St Theodore church (there are no modern publications on The Holy Virgin church) sometimes provoke the revival of old legends and the creation of new hypothesis about the function and the fate of the building. This is due to the lack of sufficient information in the written sources or pieces of art as well as memories of witnesses or participants in the village life prior the mid 19th century.

Studies on the written sources and unregulated archaeological activities carried out by N. Panayotov, the collaborator at that time of the Historical collection in the town of Provadiya, resulted in the development of the mythology. He alleged that the trench excavations in 1978, carried out in the courtyard of the St Theodore church, yielded a mass grave of more than a thousand people slaughtered in 1796 by *kırcalı* who had attacked the village.<sup>9</sup> The thesis of a massacre earlier than the one in the town of Batak (1876) found a fertile soil in publications for the general audience and although the figures were reduced to a more realistic number, a discovery of 140 human skulls in a trench which is 2 sq. m large still arouses suspicion.<sup>10</sup> No regional or national institution keeps in its archives documentation or academic records supporting these statements.

The renewed interest and care for the monument in the early 21st century also aroused new hypotheses about its nature. Analyzing the typical features of the church – vaulted and elongated stone space, an apse lacking an iconostasis

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<sup>9</sup> Панайотов, Н. *Евреите и юдаизмът – начало на човешката цивилизация преди 7000 години*. София, 2002, 377.

<sup>10</sup> Георгиев, Й. „Тайната на църквата „Свети Теодор“, в-к *Поглед*, 21.VII. 1980.



wall, a „synthroné“ – architect Y. Bankov discovers a number of marks typical of the Early Christian cult buildings and connects them to the affiliation of the temple to the Roman Catholic Denomination related to the presence of Dubrovnik merchants in Provadiya in the 16th–17th centuries.<sup>11</sup> Architect St. Boyadzhiev also pays attention to similar elements typical of the catholic churches – an altar space, which is round-shaped like an oven and widely opened towards the naos, a low „bench“ for the chorus in it – although his observations concern St Spas church in Sofia which is currently situated under the foundations of the modern building of Bulbank in the center of the capital city and nearby the ancient western city wall of Serdica.<sup>12</sup>

In a newspaper article the archaeologist Ara Margos relates the plan and the construction of the church to the so-called „Arbanassi“ type of church dated back to the 16th–17th centuries – there are such churches in Chiprovtsi (Montana region), the village of Arbanassi (Veliko Tarnovo region) and the village of Poroishte (Razgrad region). However, the construction of the Chiprovtsi, Arbanassi and Poroishte churches differs from the one in Dobrina. The construction techniques used in Arbanassi do not include stone blocks masonry with carefully designed elements for a specific place in the walls or the vault. The vaulted churches in Arbanassi do not have such impressive dimensions of the vaults and the latter do not cover the entire space. Archaeological excavations have been carried out at the church of the Catholic monastery at Chiprovtsi but the result from the investigation have not been published yet; it is worth reminding that it is a church of Bulgarian Catholics which was constructed in accordance with the Roman Catholic church tradition as described in 1640 by Archbishop Petar Bogdan.<sup>13</sup> The Poroishte church was in ruins but the archaeological excavations revealed that in accordance with the traditions of that time it was built from stones bound with thin mortar layer.<sup>14</sup> A. Margos also points out an embrasure opening for gun firing located to the left from the southern entrance of the church, which creates an impression of a fortress in St Theodore in Dobrina. In his publications he presents objective information and makes reasonable conclusions despite using a limited amount of information.

The historical and archaeological data as well as the newly discovered photograph make me believe that both churches in Dobrina were Christian Orthodox churches. The Greek inscriptions in the wall painting of The Holy Virgin church relates the churches to the presence – although it was comparatively short, from the second half of the 16th until the early 19th century – of Albanian

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<sup>11</sup> Банков, Я. „Църквата „Св. Теодор“ в с. Добрина, община Провадия“, [www.stroitelstvo.bg](http://www.stroitelstvo.bg) / български строителен портал, 2003.

<sup>12</sup> Бояджиев, С. „Църковната архитектура на българските католици през XVI–XVII в.“, *Католическата духовна култура и нейното присъствие и влияние в България* (ред. А. Николов и др.), София, 1992, 213–220.

<sup>13</sup> Дуйчев, И. *Архив за поселищни проучвания*, София, II год., 2 кн., 1939/40, 186, 202–203.

<sup>14</sup> Маргос, А. „Късносредновековните църкви „Св. Димитър“ и „Св. Никола“ в село Пороище, Разградско“, *Известия на Народния музей – Варна*, кн. 22 (37), 1986, 107–133.



Christian population. To the available information we should also add the grave stones which were found near the two churches and were moved several times from one of the churchyards into the other. One of these grave stones is published by K. Škorpil himself. It is a parallelepiped-shaped limestone block with a 7 or 8 line inscription in Greek dated 1448.<sup>15</sup> The rest of the grave stones which were transferred and assembled in the western part of the courtyard during the renovation of The Nativity of the Theotokos church (fig. 8), undertaken few years ago, are also very interesting from both artistic and historical point of view. Their research is a forthcoming task.

If it can be assumed that both churches served one and the same population at one and the same time, or subsequently, a question arises about the number of this population and the status it had within the Ottoman Empire that allowed them to receive permission for the construction of two church buildings. These two churches, in spite of being dug into the ground, had been constructed by extremely skillful builders, and most probably decorated by very skilful artists. The typical features of the two churches in Dobrina as well as the materials and their construction raise completely different questions. They are related to the development of the constructions traditions and art as well as to a study on the work of probable construction organizations which in that period were taking commissions in various parts of the Ottoman Empire. It is worth noting that the construction technique used for the two churches in the village of Dobrina is similar to the one used in the construction of some mosques and ottoman public buildings (fig. 9).

St Theodore church, being a very well preserved monument, still keeps many secrets. They can probably be unveiled by a complete study of the history of the village of Dobrina. The village has very interesting relations with the adjacent Ovech fortress – an important administrative and metropolitan center during the Second Bulgarian Kingdom. The Turkish name of the settlement – Dizdarköy – is incorrectly translated by N. Ganev as „a village of the walnut trees“ or „walnut village“.<sup>16</sup> A linguistic verification reveals that the word „dizdar“ has entered the Turkish language from the Persian language and means „guards of the fortress“.<sup>17</sup> It will be very interesting to unearth from oblivion what the old population was, the one that left this place in the 18th – the early 19th century. Did it have in the past centuries a special status which allowed the building and maintenance of two magnificent churches? Until when was this status kept and how did these people participate in the events from the first half of the 19th century? A great deal of the history of this beautiful little town has been lost in the exuberant nettles and

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<sup>15</sup> Шкорпил, К. Абоба-Плиска, *Известия Русского археологического института в Константинополе*, том X, София, 1905, 240, N 6, Table XLVI, fig. 5; *Science archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences*, f. 165 K, op. 1, a.u. 728, p. 4, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Ганев, Н. *Провадия в своето минало и настояще*, София, 1929, 125.

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.tdk.gov.tr/TR/Genel/SozBul.aspx?F6E10F8892433CFFAAAF6AA849816B2EF4376734BED947CDE&Kelime=dizdar/> 08.06.2011.



thistle thorns after the steps of „the guards of the fortress“ on the old cobblestone pavement had died away. Let us hope that bits of the memory, kept in the archives and in the ground of Dobrina, will help us to find it again.

*Translated by Tatiana Stefanova*

## **Резюме**

*Снежана Горянова*

### **Старите църкви в с. Добрина, Провадийско – пътят от забравата към нови митове**

При пътуването си из България през 1884 г. проф. К. Иречек накратко описва съвременното село Добрина близо до Провадия, чието турско име е било Диздаркьой. Той отразява впечатлението си, че някога Добрина е била прекрасно градче, но „покрай буйните коприви и бодили, мизерните малки колиби“ то изглежда като полузапустяло селище.

Най-голям интерес у Иречек събуждат двете църкви в селото – наскоро разчистената и възобновена „Свети Теодор“ и руинираната „Пресвета Богородица“. Той описва архитектурните останки на двата обекта и следите от живопис в апсидата на „Пресвета Богородица“.

Последното археологическо проучване на църквата „Св. Теодор“, ръководено от автора на настоящата статия, е проведено през 2006 г.

Храмът е разположен в средата на малък двор. Вкопан е дълбоко в земята. Постройката е еднокорабна, едноапсидна и обединява в един обем олтарна апсида, предапсидно пространство, наос и галерия. Общата ѝ дължина вътре е 24,30 м, а ширината 6,38/6,68 м.

Градежът е изцяло от варовикови паралелепипедни блокове. Липсват следи от живопис.

Чрез археологически сондажи във вътрешността е установено, че фундаването на основите е много плитко и няма следи от градежи, предхождащи строителството на църквата.

През 1906 г. този храм е изоставен, а върху развалините на по-старата е построена действащата днес църква „Рождество на Пресвета Богородица“.

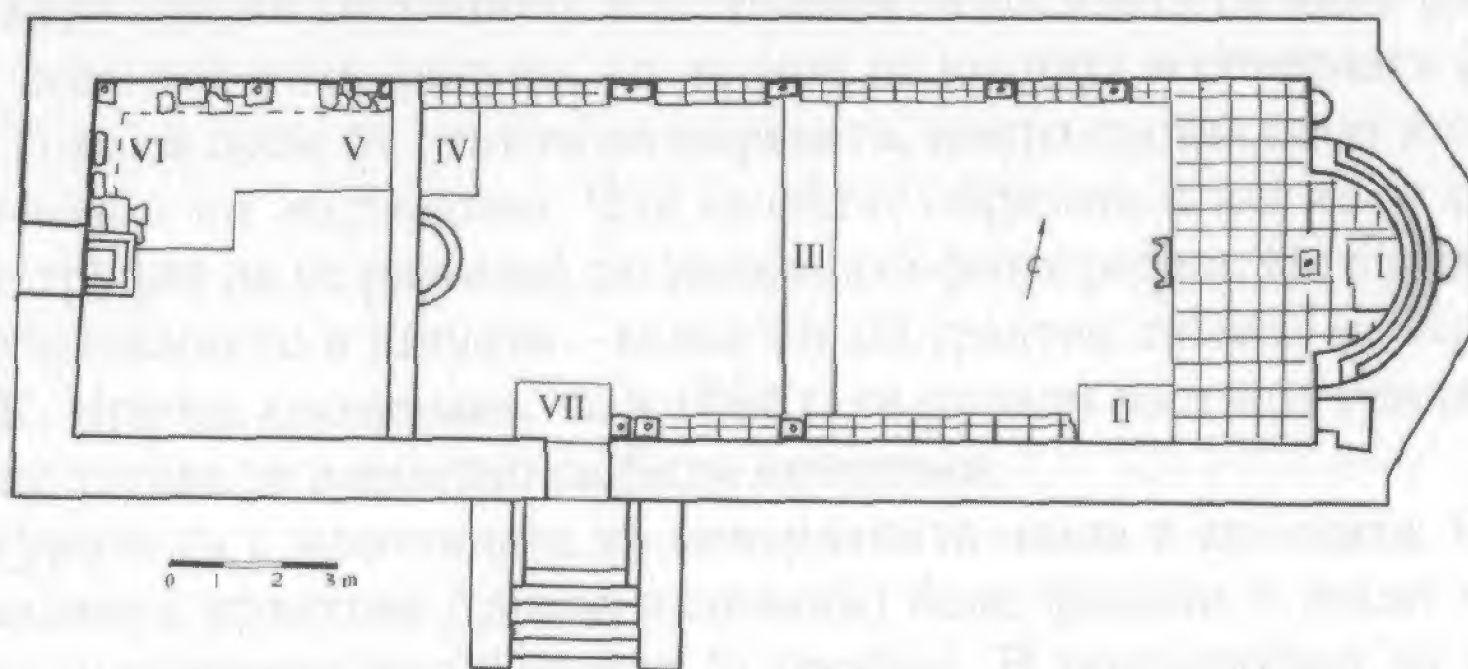
Там не са провеждани археологически наблюдения или разкопки. Останките от късносредновековния градеж са били напълно съборени и разчистени, с което единственият спомен за старата постройка е останал в описанието на К. Иречек.

След повече от век в архива на Карел Шкорпил, съхраняван в Научния архив на БАН, открих и един визуален спомен за този по-ранен градеж. Това е една недатирана черно-бяла снимка. Към датировката ни насочва една записка на К. Шкорпил за посещението му в Диздаркьой през 1906 г. Т.е. фо-





**Fig. 1** – St Theodor church in the village of Dobrina, Provadiya municipality, view from south-west



**Fig. 2** – St Theodor church in the village of Dobrina, Provadiya municipality, plan



**Fig. 3** – St Theodor church, the apse





*Fig. 4 – The Nativity of the Theotokos church and its courtyard, view from south-east*



*Fig. 5 – The Holy Virgin church. Picture from Karel Škorpil's archive  
(Science archive of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, f. 165 K)*









*Fig. 8 – Grave stones in the west part of The Nativity of the Theotokos church's courtyard, Dobrina village*



*Fig. 9 – Mosque with Turkish baths (hamam) in Provadiya, detail of the construction.*



original design – as found letters of Aristotle and was also revised slightly, but the main point was the probability that the original design of the book was intended to be a letter. Several of the letters in the book reflected that the first letter, it said for the political system of the Byzantine Empire. The book was published in 1980 as the 10th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Bulgaria. The book of letters was published in the Byzantine world during the 10th century after the restoration of the Byzantine empire in 1054 under the Macedonian dynasty, which resulted in a new attitude towards Western influences. The first official use of the term "Byzantine" as a term of reference of some date from the late 15th century, and was first recorded in all the Italian literature as well as in the works of Marco Polo, Pausanias, Plutarch, and Christopher Columbus.

The author explores the historical events and the situation of a Byzantine empire by the modern European state along with Russia, which was the main ally of the Byzantine empire. The author also explores the Byzantine empire as well as the Byzantine empire. The Byzantine empire has been transformed into a sign of the Byzantine empire, which is widely used by the Byzantine empire.

## **MEMORY AND OBLIVION IN BYZANTIUM ПАМЕТ И ЗАБРАВА ВЪВ ВИЗАНТИЯ**

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